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**LASALLIAN
THEMES**

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS Via
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INTRODUCTION

The present publication of *Lasallian Themes 3* in English brings to a conclusion the original plan launched some 8 years ago to invite selected authors to contribute articles to a collection of 100 Lasallian topics. Each theme, presented within a limited framework as regarded its length, was to offer those indispensable elements of the topic which needed to be taken into consideration in order to do justice to the thinking of John Baptist de La Salle as expressed in his writings.

The very nature of the enterprise assumed that there had to be a broadly historical approach to each theme. It was important, for example, that words and expressions be understood in their late 17th century French context and that some indication be given of any substantial change in usage for today's readers. What the original project had not anticipated, however, was the great diversity of approaches of the invited authors in relation to a particular culture and education as members of an international Institute. This, in itself, has been one of the most enriching aspects of the overall project. At the same time, this variety of approaches has meant that the translation of all the themes into the three different languages most widely used in the Institute has had its own difficulties where the theme does not appear to resonate with the culture in which it is being read.

This difficulty has also had its benefits. The choice of the 100 Themes was not intended to leave the reader in the comparative security of the historical past. The correlation with other themes, presented at the end of each topic and the indication of a basic bibliography, meant that the last word on the theme has not yet been written. What the theme offered was the challenge to consider its importance in relation to the world, the society, the many and diversified cultures, where members of the Lasallian Family continue to work today for the Lasallian Mission of human and Christian education. In his preface to *Lasallian Themes 1*, Brother Leon Lauraire pointed out that "they [the Themes] offer opportunities for reflection and act as an invitation to pursue still further the work of research and interpretation".

It is in the same spirit of inviting readers to further *reflection* and *action* on these foundations of thinking from the Lasallian heritage that this present volume is added. Our special thanks go to the authors and the editorial committee. Readers of this English edition owe a special debt to the indefatigable translator, Brother Allen Geppert, who is responsible for all translations into English in this volume.

Rome, June 23rd 1997
Br Gerard Rummery
General Councillor

FOREWORD TO THE FRENCH EDITION

When Brother Leon Lauraire introduced the first volume of *Lasallian Themes* on November 6th 1992, he spoke in terms of "a good hundred articles based on the writings of De La Salle". With this volume we reach article 99, but not the end of the series.

What characterises this third volume more than the preceding ones is the difference in approach adopted in the various articles. Some limit themselves strictly to describing the use of a term; others are so broad in their approach that at one time we considered publishing them separately. These latter include *Chastity* by Br Jaume Pujol, the *Conduct of Christian Schools* by Br Leon Lauraire and the *Imitation of Christ* by Br Antonio Botana. Our selection committee, however, thought that the contribution of these articles was so valuable that they ought to be included in the present volume.

A certain number of readers have shown their interest in the *Lasallian Themes* by expressing their surprise at the delay in the publication of this third volume. The reason for this delay is simple: as a way of lowering the price of their publications, the Lasallian Studies team have decided, where possible, to compose them on computer without using outside facilities. This decision delayed the publication date of this volume by a year - a year spent in acquiring the necessary equipment, the necessary expertise to use it, and in doing the work. We hope that our readers will be amply rewarded by the quality of the work for the delay we have imposed on them.

Volume 3 of *Lasallian Themes* is the fruit of much collaboration by those who wrote the articles, those who checked them, those who translated them and those who composed the texts for printing. I am most grateful to all of them for their contribution to this joint undertaking. Some readers have already contacted us, offering to write articles for volume 4. No doubt they feel there is a need at the present time for a Lasallian analysis of some of the topics envisaged when the series was launched, and which have not yet been treated.

In the case of some of these topics, no volunteers have come forward. The reason for this is probably because no Brothers have so far published research on them: it would not be enough to improvise, even in summary form, on such topics as soul-body or the direction of conscience. In the case of other topics, articles have been written but have been rejected by the selection committee, because it was thought they did not do complete justice to the dynamism of St La Salle's thinking, or because they did not fit in with the aims of the *Lasallian Themes* series. It is not enough to begin with present-day ideas and then look for support for them in the writings of the Founder. It is better to bring to the surface patiently areas of research worth pursuing in the life and writings of the Founder as a whole and then let them challenge the needs of our times.

The selection committee has decided therefore to publish a fourth volume of *the Lasallian Themes*, which will also be the last of the series. It believes that, since some key issues of our Lasallian lives would be covered in it, the thinking and effort involved in producing this volume would be worthwhile. We believe that in this way the *Lasallian Themes* series will achieve the aim it set itself and meet the expectations of its readers.

Rome, October 9th 1996.

Br Alain Houry Director of
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PRINCIPAL ABBREVIATIONS

Writings of St John Baptist de La Salle

- CE Conduct of the Christian Schools (*Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes*, CL 24, 1706 ms)
DA The Duties of a Christian, in continuous prose (*Les Devoirs d'un chrétien*, CL 20, 1703 edition)
DB The Duties of a Christian, in question and answer form (*Les Devoirs d'un chrétien*, CL 21, 1703 edition)
DC External and Public worship, part 3 of the Duties of a Christian (*Du culte extérieur, Troisième partie des Devoirs d'un chrétien*, CL 22, 1703 edition)
E Exercices of piety (*Exercices de piété*, CL 18, 1760 edition)
EM Explanation of the Method of Mental prayer (*Explication de la méthode d'oraison*, CL 14, 1739 edition)
EP Personal writings (*Écrits personnels*, CL 2,42 & CL 10,114f)
ED Rule of the Brother Director (*Règle du Frère Directeur*, CL 25, 1718 ms)
GA The Duties of a Christian, Long Summary (*Les Devoirs du chrétien, Grand abrégé*, CL 23, 1727 edition)
I Instructions and prayers (*Instructions et prières*, CL 17, 1734 edition)
LA Original letters (*Lettres autographes*, ms edited in 1954)
LC Copied letters (*Lettres copiées*, ms edited in 1954)
LI Printed letters (*Lettres imprimées*, CL 8 mainly, edited in 1954)
MD Meditations for all the Sundays (*Méditations pour tous les dimanches*, CL 12, 1731 edition)
ME Meditations for the principal feasts (*Méditations pour les principaux fêtes*, CL 12, 1731 edition)
MH Memoir on the Habit (*Mémoire sur l'habit*, CL 11, 1690 ms)
MR Meditations for the Time of Retreat (*Méditations pour le temps de la retraite*, CL 13, 1730 edition)
P Daily Prayers of the Brothers (*Prières quotidiennes des Frères*, 1738 ms)
PA The Duties of a Christian, Short Summary (*Les Devoirs d'un chrétien, Petit abrégé*, CL 23, 1727 edition)
R Collection of various short treatises (*Recueil de différents petits traités*, CL 15, 1711 edition)
RB Rules of propriety and Christian politeness (*Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne*, (CL 19, 1703 edition)
RC Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (*Règles communes*, CL 25, 1718 ms)
RD Directories (*Directoires*, CL 15, 1711 edition)

Page references are usually made to Cahiers lasalliens (CL) and to the complete works (Oeuvres complètes) in French (1993). For cross-reference to the English translation of the letters, see The Letters... p.287f.

Various

- AEP SAUVAGE, M., and CAMPOS, M., *JBS, Annoncer l'Évangile aux Pauvres*, Paris, 1977 - partly translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, *St. John Baptist de La Salle, Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*. Romeville, 1981
AMG Archives of the FSC Generalate in Rome BJ
The Jerusalem Bible (French edition, Paris, 1955)
CL *Cahiers lasalliens*, series founded in Rome in 1959 (e.g.: CL 38,18 = vol. 38, p. 18)
DS *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Paris, 1937-1995
TOB *Bible*, ecumenical translation in French, Paris, 1976
VTB *Vocabulaire de Théologie biblique*, Paris, 1988

For the abbreviations of the books of the Bible, see Lasallian Themes 1, p. 9.

66. ABANDONMENT TO PROVIDENCE

Summary

1. The views of close contemporaries.

2. The teaching in the 67th meditation

2.1. The teachers object: "It's easy for you to talk!" 2.2. The example of Fr. Barre 2.3. A personal commitment 2.4. Material goods and apostolic workers.

3. The need for poverty and foresight

3.1. With Gabriel Drolin 3.2. "The guidance of Providence".

4. "It is God who, in his Providence, has established the Christian Schools" (MR 193, title)

4.1. God's Providence and the ministry of the Church. 4.2. Abandonment and the guidance of God.

5. Conclusion: Abandoning ourselves to Providence today.

In order to live, a person has to take himself in hand, accept his responsibilities and assert his mastery over the world. However, his experience of beauty, love and contact with God lead him to become detached, to abandon himself even to death, which is the ultimate degree of detachment. To trust completely in Providence or to use the means God has given us; to forget self completely or resign from our responsibility as a human being: where do we draw the line? Today sects are a source of fascination, in the past there was the dispute over Quietism. It is not easy to define holy abandonment.

1. THE VIEWS OF CLOSE CONTEMPORARIES

The portrait of John Baptist de La Salle on the frontispiece of the first edition of his meditations is accompanied by an inscription which enumerates "the Christian virtues" characteristic of "the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who [...] lived in a state of total abandonment to Providence for the forty years he lived with the Brothers of his Institute".

Br Timothée, the Superior General, who edited these meditations in 1730, must surely have endorsed this brief summary, convinced that it drew attention to a major characteristic of the way in which De La Salle had practised the Christian virtues, "especially

charity and zeal for the instruction of youth, and in particular, of the poor".

Fr Baiÿn, who died in 1696, was De La Salle's spiritual director. He admired "his perfect abandonment to Divine Providence and his unreserved resignation to God's good pleasure" (CL 7,330).

In a letter dated 1703, Charles de la Grange, parish priest of Villiers le Bel, speaks of the refusal of the Brothers in Paris to accept an ecclesiastic as superior in the place of De La Salle: "No one can be more edified than I [...] by his total abandonment to Providence [...]. There is no Quietism in this" (CL 7, 418).

Quoting the words of a canon of the cathedral of Laon — probably Pierre Guyart — who had known the Founder of the Brothers at close quarters, Blain states that "his heroic abandonment to Divine Providence" is a major trait of "M. de La Salle's character" (CL 8,254f & 262).

The examples which support this assertion show that this trait is not primarily an element in a purely

ascetic programme, but a means to bring about the existence of the Christian Schools. Fr Barre who, in France, was the first to found "Christian and gratuitous schools" (CL 7,172) had not been able to find candidates suited to "a lifestyle of total destitution and abandonment to Divine Providence" (CL 7,146). Would De La Salle find any? Would he succeed in making them find stability in their vocation?

2. THE TEACHING IN THE 67th MEDITATION

The 67th meditation, entitled "Of Abandonment to Providence", tells the Brothers that in the Gospel of the day, Jesus Christ is speaking in particular to them, when he says: "Make it your first care to find the Kingdom of God" (Mt 6,33).

This is something that concerns the Brothers because of their vocation, which leads them to work for the establishment of the reign of God in the hearts of their pupils (MD 67,1). The second point provides the Brothers with the convincing proof — "See how the wild lilies grow..." — that Jesus gives his apostles. If they fulfil their duties and devote all their energy solely to making God reign in their own hearts and in those of their pupils, they will never lack what is necessary: faith tells them so (MD 67,2).

2.1. The teachers object: "It's easy for you to talk!"

This is not the first time that De La Salle uses this "language of perfection" (CL 7,191) when speaking to his followers. In 1682, when his teachers were apprehensive about their financial future, he had appealed to them to put their trust in Providence (CL 7,187).

They replied: "It's easy for you to talk, since you have everything you need. If our establishment fails, you remain on your feet; the fact our lives are ruined does not mean yours is. All that awaits us is poverty, and begging as the only way to alleviate it" (CL 7,188).

The direct language of the teachers made De La Salle realise that his reference to the Gospel did not carry much weight, given that he did not share the social condition of those he wanted to challenge (Cf. AEP 55).

After much hesitation and reflection, he finally decided to give up his canonry and his inheritance. Blain (CL 7,218) describes De La Salle's thoughts as

he sought to discover what to do with his inheritance: should he "found" his schools, that is, set up a capital fund and use the interest generated for their upkeep, as Nicolas Roland did, and as the teachers and his friends wanted him to? As Andre Rayez writes (RAM 121,14): "Barre, the man of Providence, gave him a practical example which De La Salle followed". This writer stresses the Salesian (St Francis de Sales) contribution to the spiritual movement of the 17th century.

2.2. The example of Fr Barre

Nicolas Barre's advice was decisive: "Divine Providence must be the only fund on which the Christian Schools should be established" (CL 7,190 & 217). And so the schools in Rheims would not benefit from De La Salle's inheritance. To proclaim the Gospel to the poor, one must follow the example of the Son of Man and abandon oneself completely to Providence (Cf. AEP 57).

The appeal made to De La Salle had come from teachers who were trying to establish a school for the poor. It was to Fr Barre, who was doing similar work, that De La Salle turned in order to discern what God wanted of him. It is this context which makes abandonment to Providence so important. And when De La Salle, in DB, which is written for children also, quotes "Make it your first care to find the Kingdom of God", he uses this quotation as a basis for "the resignation we must have to the will of God regarding temporal goods, when we pray to him" (CL 21,258 = DB 4,3,15):

2.3. A personal commitment

During the famine of the winter of 1684 (CL 7,219), De La Salle distributed his personal wealth to the poor. He did not touch, of course, the inheritance

of his brothers and sisters and, on the advice of his spiritual director, kept an income of 200 livres (CL 4,61) which was the bare minimum he asked per Brother when a school was established. On a number of occasions, the Brothers and their Founder experienced utter destitution: "Abandonment to Providence would not be rewarded always by a life of relative ease" (AEP69).

By the 1691 "vow of association and union", and then by the vow of 1694, which constituted the *Society of the Christian Schools*, each of those who made the vows made a commitment in solidarity with their companions "to direct together and by association gratuitous schools [...] even if I were obliged to beg for alms and live on bread alone in order to do so" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,3).

This is precisely the risk the first teachers refused to run, and which De La Salle took, first before them and then with them. In this context, words acquire a special significance. De La Salle saw that, since his own renunciation, no Brother had left because the Community was not "founded" (CL 7,326).

2.4. Material goods and apostolic workers

Basing himself on St Paul — "You must not put a muzzle on the ox when it is treading out the

corn", 1 Co 9,9 — the Founder exhorts the Brothers to abandon themselves to God regarding temporal goods because they are gathering in a harvest of souls, and it was the Lord who employed them (MD 67,3).

Other spiritual writers immediately see abandonment to Providence as having to do with interior trials and personal salvation. We shall see later that De La Salle also at times appeals to Providence in this personal context. Here, however, we see this view of faith making him accept a precarious situation, which is the situation of apostolic workers totally committed to the mission they have received to bring the Gospel to children.

The example of St Barnabas, who sold some land and gave the money he received to the Apostles, shows "the good that can be accomplished in the Church by one who is truly detached", who demonstrates much faith, since, "when one abandons oneself to God's Providence unreservedly, one is like a man who would put to sea without sail or oars" (MF 134,1).

From commitment to commitment, De La Salle and his Brothers demonstrated a great deal of faith and did much good in the Church. Abandonment to the Providence which employs them to bring salvation to poor children, and being present to them, are two aspects of the same process (Cf. AEP 70).

3. THE NEED FOR POVERTY AND FORESIGHT

St Cajetan, who did not allow the members of his Order to beg, is an example of excessive detachment in God's service, or in the words of meditation 153, "to such an excess, if we may say so. He wished to rely solely on divine Providence for food, clothing and other bodily wants" (MF 153,3).

The Brothers cannot be too disinterested in their work: they teach the poor. They are committed to running schools gratuitously and have promised to live on bread alone, if needs be, rather than receive anything from the children or their parents (Cf. MF 153,3).

The language here is reminiscent of the formula of vows and of the *Collection*, when it reminds the Brothers "Of the obligations of the vows". While not eve-

ryone pronounces vows, "gratuity is essential for their Institute" (RC 7,1) and all must be "always ready to beg, if Providence wishes it, and to die utterly destitute" (CL 15,179f - R 15,10,1).

3.1. With Gabriel Drolin

In a letter to Gabriel Drolin, who had been sent to Rome without any kind of human support, De La Salle speaks of his joy at knowing that he is prepared to live detached from the world: "Still, when you decide to do this, you must put yourself entirely in the hands of Divine Providence, or if you do not have enough virtue for that nor enough faith, then you must take the necessary means before you carry out your plan. If you do neither, you are not acting as a Christian nor as an intelligent man" (LA 19,14).

In the following letter he explains his thoughts more clearly: it is advantageous to live withdrawn from the world, but "you have to have life's necessities, and you need to know where you can get them before you leave the world" (LA 20,15). This is a far cry from the "duty of not using foresight", which some advocated.

When the Founder agreed to open a school, he insisted on **a regular salary for each of his teachers.**

His family background had taught him the value of a regularly drawn up contract. However, there was nothing to fall back on in the case of illness or the closure of the school. In addition, the community had to look after the Brothers without salaries: the director, student Brothers, the elderly.

Abandonment to Providence presupposes discernment and, therefore, advice (LA 13,14). When Gabriel Drolin fears to abandon himself too much to Providence, De La Salle tells him: "Never think that I will abandon you" (LA 14,5): community solidarity.

De La Salle reminds Gabriel Drolin to look for signs from Providence to see if God "approves his work" and if Providence is helping or "wanting to help him" (LA 20,17). Four months later he reprimands him for leaving the house of M. de La Bussiere who had agreed to provide meals for him for no payment: it was providential, "a place provided by Providence" at a time when the finances of the Institute did not allow the Founder to provide for the needs of the Brother left on his own in Rome. Br Gabriel could at least have asked if De La Salle agreed with his leaving (LA 21,7-8).

In the preceding letter he had said: "God placed you in M. de La Bussiere's house". He should have stayed there till he had an employment which ensured his financial independence (LA 20,6 & 9).

3.2. "The guidance of Providence"

"You do well to wait on the guidance of Providence", he tells Gabriel Drolin in the same letter (LA

20,3). A month previously he had written: "As for myself, I do not like to make the first move in any endeavour, and I will not do it in Rome any more than elsewhere. I leave it to Providence to make the first move and then I am satisfied" (LA 18,17).

Blain recalls a number of examples of this attitude in the life of the Founder. The bishop of Chartres offered to help him obtain official recognition of the Institute. The Founder thanked him, but he did not think that such steps were appropriate at the moment: "Since the Institute of the Brothers was the work of Providence, the question of Letters Patent were best left to it" (CL 8,267).

A few years before the Founder's death, the Brothers wished to bring up the question again, but he answered: "Let yourselves be guided by Providence: you can bring it up again after my death if you like" (CL 8,267). One day, in connection with the property of St Yon which had been leased on somewhat precarious terms, De La Salle urged his Brothers to abandon themselves to Divine Providence: "They had to consider buying it. This proposal surprised them" (CL 8,158), because this was not the first example of abandonment that would have naturally sprung to mind. All the more so as his business sense had led him to forbid Br Thomas to improve the garden of St Yon for fear that this would put up the price when they tried to buy it (CL 8,264).

These few examples show that "the guidance of Providence", far from being opposed to prudent human behavior, in fact presupposes it and guides it towards the accomplishment of the mission received. This is the spirit in which a superior should inspire great confidence in his inferiors; and to do so he will be careful "to provide for all their spiritual and bodily needs" (*Advice for Brothers in charge*, 47, if this text is really De La Salle's). The Rule says the same thing regarding the sick: "Each of the Brothers will be given whatever he needs" (RC 22,1).

4. "IT IS GOD WHO, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, HAS ESTABLISHED THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS" (MR 193, TITLE)

"It is true that I began to train Brothers to run schools gratuitously" (LI 117,2). Towards the end of his life, De La Salle recognised the role he had played in the creation of the Institute. The reason we are concerned by the role he played and by his thinking is first of all because he was the Founder. The statement with which he introduces *the Meditations for the time of retreat* is all the more significant on this account: "That it is God who, in his Providence, has established the Christian Schools".

"In his providential care, God has appointed others to take the place of fathers and mothers in this responsibility. He sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and his Mysteries" (MR 193,2). Later he says: "Not only does God will that everyone come to the knowledge of truth, but he wants everyone to be saved [...] and he has chosen you to help in this work" (MR 193,3).

The title of the 5th meditation speaks of "those chosen by Providence for the work of education" (MR 197, title). The same idea occurs in the MF: "Adore God's Providence in withdrawing you from the world [...] for the purpose of training a large number of children in the Christian spirit" (MF 131,1). We have here the basis of the ministry of Christian education.

4.1. God's Providence and the ministry of the Church

It is God who has chosen the Brothers (MR 193,3) and it is the Church which has chosen them likewise to procure for children the spirit of Christianity (MR 199,1). While the Christian teacher is needed for the transmission of the faith, he cannot undertake this task without an explicit mandate from the Church, because the providential will of God is involved (POUTET, 1,205, see in bibliography). The Providence of God and the authority of the Church go hand in hand, as do Providence and prudent human behaviour.

We see this clearly on the occasion when it seemed to De La Salle that the Church authorities were opposed to some aspects of the Brothers' ministry: he drew up memoirs to defend the choice of "a strange

habit" for the Brothers (CL 11,352 - MH 0,0,33) and for using French to teach reading (CL 7,375f); he disappeared for a while till the storm died down (CL 8,39) and left Paris discreetly when the Cardinal de Noailles sided with the Jansenists (CL 8,129): there are many means available for down-to-earth discernment.

Daily discernment takes place through obedience by abandonment to the guidance of superiors: "Fidelity to revealing one's conscience to one's superior or director" (CL 15,107 = R 13,2). This also implies the government of the Institute by one of the Brothers and the refusal to have an ecclesiastical superior who is not a member of the Society. This request is much more than the legitimate wish of a group to govern itself (CL 8,131). It implies discerning the will of God together and abandoning oneself to it.

4.2. Abandonment and the guidance of God

In a letter to a Brother, De La Salle is pleased that the latter's disposition is "that of total abandonment" (LA 34,1). In a letter to another Brother he says the same thing: "I am very pleased at yourself abandonment which leads you to do whatever is required of you" (LI 60,6). This is not, however, the passivity of Quietism: "In prayer often abandon yourself to God's guidance and tell him frequently that all you want is the accomplishment of his will" (LA 33,7). One needs to be able to give in to this interior attraction (Cf. CL 14,124 foreword - EM 19,330), I must ask God in prayer "that he tell me what he wants me to do and that he inspire me with the disposition he wants me to have" (LI 5,2).

This is particularly necessary for "abandonment to God in trials and spiritual dryness" (MD 20). We must not feel "abandoned by God" when we are tempted (MD 17,3), or feel incapable of doing good (MD 17,1), but we should adore "Jesus Christ's abandonment to suffering and death" (MD 24). It is worth noting in this last point the responsible attitude of Jesus in adapting to circumstances in order to be faithful to the will of his Father (MD 24,1). It may be here that the key lies regarding how to apply teachings initially written for the Brothers to Lasallian lay people.

5. CONCLUSION: ABANDONING OURSELVES TO PROVIDENCE TODAY

In a world in which insurance companies agree to cover so many foreseeable and unforeseeable risks, how can we follow the example of St John Baptist de La Salle and abandon ourselves to Providence? Should we do as Mother Teresa of Calcutta and refuse to accept state social security in the name of total reliance on Providence?

De La Salle, as we have seen, took a different approach. In a world in which material security was usually dependent on income from a safe capital fund -a foundation- he chose an approach based on the payment of salaries to his Brothers, paid, in a number of instances, by property companies which owned the community and school premises.

At the present time, when security is generally assured by a regular salary, we see volunteers accepting to devote some years of their lives, for hardly any salary, to help young people in the Third or Fourth World. By taking risks regarding their careers, their peace of mind and sometimes their health, they experience more easily the abandonment spoken of by the Founder of the Brothers.

In fact, the demanding experience of going to work among the poor can help us to work towards and achieve identification with Christ, the evangeliser of the poor, who employs us as his "ministers".

All Christians are not called to this type of commitment, but the abandonment to God which established the Christian schools enables everyone to share in Jesus' abandonment to the will of his Father, according to the vocation he has discovered through assiduous prayer.

One way which can help us adopt a spirit of abandonment to the guidance of God is to join an educational team and accept to take into account, through its discernment regarding God's will for us, the appeals of our superiors.

This presupposes an active faith, a "spirit of faith" which makes us look at persons and institutions in the way that God sees them. This makes us see a scale of values according to which things and organisations are less important than the persons who put themselves at their service. "God has made of man his own Providence", St Thomas Aquinas tells us. It is by making use of the necessary means, without making them an end in themselves, that a person abandons himself to God in a responsible manner.

Always putting means at the service of the persons for whom they are intended is to start off resolutely along a path that is particularly demanding regarding purity of actions and motives.

Complementary themes

Conduct
Consolation

Director
God

God's Work
Ministry
Renunciation

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67. CELEBRATING

Summary

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Marking a friend's birthday by a small celebration offers an opportunity to show, once a year, deep-seated feelings that are in danger of being masked by the daily routine of life. People need visible signs to express what is invisible.

In the same way, the phenomenon of religion is first of all recognised because of its sacred language, ritualised gestures and group celebrations, and only afterwards by its personalised interior aspect. A relationship with the Sacred cannot be satisfied by ordinary language: it is expressed on a symbolic plane, which alone can speak of realities beyond the reach of human beings. The biblical Revelation of God adds an historical dimension: Easter is no longer simply an agricultural feast marking the first fruits of the year; it is a commemoration of the departure from Egypt, the pledge of a new Freedom.

In the writings of John Baptist de La Salle, the only celebrations mentioned are those included in the calendar of the Catholic Church. Consequently, this article will limit itself to these only. This should not suggest, however, that De La Salle was not aware of more secular forms of celebration.

1. WORSHIP IN THE 17th CENTURY

From the 4th to the 7th century, there developed gradually in the Catholic Church a more or less unified form of rite established by a number of Councils. Later on, the Council of Trent contributed to the restoration of a vigorous unity in the Church, made necessary by the Protestant Reformation. Pius V was responsible for a revised form of the breviary (1567) and an amended missal (1568). In addition, there was launched an overall liturgical reform: in 1588, the *Congregation of Rites* was made responsible for ensuring respect in the Latin Church for liturgical rules.

In the days of De La Salle, there continued to survive in France its own so-called neo-gallican liturgy. Trained in the school of St Sulpice to have the greatest respect for all that came from Rome, De La Salle always opted for the Roman Tridentine liturgy, where the Mass, the breviary and the liturgical calendar were concerned. It was during this period, in fact, that the reform undertaken as a result of the Council of Trent finally became a reality in France.¹

1.1. Unity between doctrine and liturgy

Liturgy is not something separate from Christian doctrine. It is not as if, on the one hand, there was doctrine and morals, and on the other, liturgy. There is interpenetration, as can easily be seen in the sacraments and the Mass. Numerous catechism books of the 17th century see close links between doctrine and Christian life, on the one hand, and liturgy — and therefore worship² — on the other.

We should not be surprised, therefore, to find De La Salle occasionally speaking also of liturgy in his *Duties of a Christian*. For example, when, in the *Duties of a Christian, vol. III* (DC), he speaks of the ceremonies accompanying sacraments, he reminds his readers that there is a more detailed description in *Duties, vol. II* (DB). When he speaks of the ceremonies of the Mass (CL 20,477 = DA 405,2,5), he refers the reader to the *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass* (CL 17 = I). We see, therefore, that Christian life is an organic whole in which worship plays an essential role. It would be very unfortunate indeed to relegate it to the side-lines.

1.2. A word about vocabulary

If, in De La Salle's day, there were people³ who did not understand even some very common concepts, it was even more likely they would not understand such words as "ceremony" and "worship" when they were used in a religious context. The catechism books of the day did not fail to explain their meaning.⁴ "Ceremonies are religious and mysterious acts which serve to make the worship of God more majestic and venerable".⁵ It should be noted that ceremonies were a part also of secular life and had to do with politeness and etiquette. As far as the word worship is concerned, De La Salle presumed that his readers understood it: he gives no explanation. La Chetardye, however, thought it necessary to explain its meaning: "The word worship means the interior and exterior respect owed to the Creator".⁶

2. CEREMONIES AND SACRAMENTS

The life of a Christian begins with a sacrament and normally ends with one too. This life develops through the reception of such sacraments as Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance or Reconciliation, Marriage and Holy Orders. It is important for a Christian to understand the liturgical significance of these high points of his spiritual life.

Why is the administration of the sacraments accompanied by ceremonies? De La Salle gives three reasons: "1. To induce us to have more respect for the

sacraments. 2. To stimulate and increase the devotion of the priests that administer them, of the faithful who receive them, and of those who are present when they are administered. 3. To help us to understand better the purpose for which these sacraments are given and the effect they produce. We understand better, for example, that the devil, who possessed those who are baptised because of the original sin that was in them, is chased out. This is because, when they are baptised they are also exorcised, just like persons possessed by the devil" (CL 21,156 = DB 3,2,16).

The significance of the ceremonies of **Baptism** can be found in CL 20,222f = DA 302,3. We should note the symbolism involved in the anointing with holy chrism. It calls to mind athletes who put oil on their bodies before fighting. The Christian likewise is anointed in view of the combats he will have to have with the enemies of his salvation. The other ceremonies are justified by a series of explanations which explain the effects of the sacrament. In the course of these explanations, De La Salle makes a remark that is quite extraordinary, given the very restrictive context of the reign of Louis XIV: one can be a Christian only by free choice; God does not force anyone to be so (CL 20,229 = DA 302, 3,15). The ceremonies of **Confirmation** also are explained in detail (CL 20,231f = DA 303).

Regarding the **Eucharist**, as has already been said, explanations of a liturgical nature are given in the Instructions. De La Salle makes a clear distinction between the liturgy of the Word, which in those days was called the Mass of the catechumens, and the Eucharistic liturgy, which was called the Mass of the faithful (CL 17,17 = I 1,6,3). One can say that his explanations cover all the liturgical aspects of the Mass. Where necessary, he points out that such or such rubric was different formerly (CL 17,38f = I 1,6,48f). Often his approach is patristic, and his overriding concern is to make his reader enter into the spirit of the Church, by making him know the prayers said by the priest during Mass and by explaining the reasons why he says them (CL 17,16 = 11,5,5).

There are abundant explanations also regarding the sacrament of **Penance**, to help the Christian understand the meaning and the purpose of his various gestures. Making the sign of the cross, for example, recalls that "it was through the Cross that our reconciliation with God was brought about". The penitent

strikes his breast "to express the horror and confusion he has because of his sins" (CL 20,324 = DA 307,5,23).

Regarding the ceremonies of **Extreme Unction** (or the sacrament of the sick), De La Salle points out that the candle placed in the hands of the sick person signifies that the latter wishes to remain attached to Jesus Christ till death, as well as to his doctrine, which is the true light, and to be himself a burning and shining light before God, consuming himself for love of him, by consecrating to him the last moments of his life with all the affection of his heart (CL 20,365 = DA 308,2,15).

He does not spend time on explanations of the ceremonies of the sacrament of **Holy Orders**, but he goes into a fair amount of detail regarding that of **Marriage** (CL 20,397f = DA 310,5). Certain rites whose symbolism was rather beautiful have disappeared. After the blessing of the rings and their exchange as a sign of union, the husband offered some coins, as a sign of his commitment to feed his wife, and as a sign that they would share their property. The husband placed his hand on that of his wife to show that "he must be the first to remain faithful". At this point, De La Salle recalls that in the past there was yet another symbol: the husband puts his cloak around his wife, "as we read in the book of Ruth", he adds. The spouses will hold in their hand "a white lighted candle to show that they should have preserved their chastity from the day of their Baptism, and that they must stand ready with their lamps lit, as the Gospel says, to go and meet the real Spouse who is Jesus Christ" (CL 20,401 = DA 310,5,12).

These few examples are enough to show that De La Salle wanted the faithful to have a clear understanding of the ceremonies accompanying worship or the administration of sacraments.

3. MASS AND THE DIVINE OFFICE

3.1. The Mass

De La Salle summarises his thinking about the Mass, the act of worship at the very centre of Christian life, in the following words: "Of all the actions that are normally performed every day, the principal and the most excellent is that of attending Holy Mass. It is also the most important for a Christian who wishes

to draw down upon himself and upon all the actions he has to perform during the day, the grace and blessings of God" (CL 17,3 = 11,1,1). Jean-Baptiste Blain, the principal Lasallian biographer of the origins of the Institute, has left us many descriptions of the man of God's profound devotion to the Eucharist (CL 7,131f; 8,234f; 8,485f).

3.2. Celebrating the Eucharist

In his *Instructions and Prayers*, De La Salle's main concern is to make the reader understand the reality behind the various rites and ceremonies. Following the practice of his day, he suggests ways of praying during the Mass: he draws on prayers from the Latin ordinary of the Mass translated into French, or uses prayers he has composed himself to fit in with the actions and prayers of the priest.

In the same way, he explains all the various blessing ceremonies that can take place during liturgical ceremonies. In this way he offers Christians a means of taking part in the celebration of the Mysteries on a deep personal level.

3.3 The Divine Office

In importance, the Divine Office comes immediately after the parish Mass. The Church has established it for a number of reasons: 1. To praise God, to adore him;⁷ 2. To be instructed by his Word; 3. To ask for his help.

J. B. de La Salle, who was a canon of the metropolitan church of Rheims and who, as a priest, recited the Divine Office daily, had no difficulty in explaining the composition of the various "hours" of this universal prayer of the Church. It was usual for monks to recite the whole office. Christian lay people, however, were encouraged in particular to attend vespers on Sundays and feasts⁸ in ordinary time. At certain times of the year, on certain "more solemn feasts", the whole office was sung "in nearly all the churches" (CL 20,479-DA405,2,9).

3.4. The Rules of the Brothers and the liturgy

As a priest, De La Salle devoted all his energy to educating the faithful⁹ in the faith. As the Founder of the Brothers, his scope for pastoral care was more restricted, but his influence was at a much deeper level. The Brothers were not obliged to recite the Divine Office (i.e. the breviary), but De La Salle required the novices to recite the office of Our Lady every day. Brothers who did not attend vespers with their pupils on Sunday were likewise required to recite this office¹⁰. He asks them to recite it as if they were reciting the breviary, with the same frame of mind, and insists on the fact that it is the prayer of the Church: When you recite it, he says, "your role is that of a public penitent, praying, praising and thanking God in the name of the whole Church and, in particular, of the whole Community" (CL 15,131 = R 14,4,2).

He tailors his teachings on the Mass and the Eucharist to the needs of the Brothers. The Rule, in particular, defines how the Brothers should go about the liturgical education of young people.¹¹ During the week, they have to take their pupils to Mass, unless they have a legitimate reason not to do so. On Sundays, the Brothers go to the church where their pupils are assembled¹² to attend the parish Mass. In the afternoon, after a catechism lesson lasting an hour and a half, the Brothers accompany their pupils to vespers. The explanation of the *External and Public Worship* was certainly used during these Sunday catechism lessons which dealt with "the principal mysteries" and therefore also with the big feasts in honour of God, Jesus Christ and the Most Blessed Virgin.

4. THE LITURGY AND THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

4.1. A "school liturgy"

The various liturgical seasons are well explained in the catechism lessons for pupils and adults.¹³ Numerous practices are suggested to prolong the effects of religious celebrations throughout the day.

If we look at the *Exercises of Piety which are performed during the day in the Christian schools* (CL 20 = E), we find described there a sort of «school liturgy» adapted to the capabilities of the children: morning and evening prayers with time for a short

reflection; prayers at the hours and half-hours; prayers before and after meals or snacks, prayers before catechism. There were prayers also special to the liturgical seasons: for Ember Days, Rogation Days, and feasts of Our Lady and Our Lord.¹⁴

4.2. The liturgical calendar

Society in the days of Louis XIV was a society that could be called "sacralised" as opposed to our 20th century which, in many places, is "desacralised

and secularised". Sacralised society is permeated by the relationship of man and God, in its actions, in its daily life, in its Christian mysteries and in the homage paid to the great servants of God. The 17th century religious calendar is full of holidays with a compulsory Mass, even if not all the daily feasts in each month are mentioned.¹⁵

The responsibility for allocating days of obligation lay with each individual diocese, and this is why De La Salle does not give an exhaustive list.¹⁶ The archbishop of Rouen, for example, reduced the number of days of obligation in his diocese in 1705, the year in which the Brothers arrived in his diocese.¹⁷

5. CELEBRATIONS AND SOCIETY: GUILDS AND THEIR PATRON SAINTS

It was a current practice in towns, dating back to the Middle Ages, to form associations, confraternities or craft guilds under the patronage of a saint. For example, the patron saint of cobblers was St Crispin, and that of goldsmiths and blacksmiths was St Eloi. Crafts, like parishes, had their patronal feastdays.

De La Salle, respecting the pastoral customs of his days, takes patron saints into account in his school regulations and catechisms: "Who are the saints called patron saints? — There are three kinds: 1. Those who first announced the Gospel in the place or province where one lives. 2. Those in whose honour the parish (or the church) where one lives was dedicated and consecrated to God. 3. The saint whose name one received at baptism or confirmation" (CL 22,295 = DC 44,23,3).

It goes without saying that De La Salle encourages respect for these liturgical feasts, especially the parish ones. He does not fail to mention the feast of St Nicholas, the patron of schoolchildren. "A holiday will

4.3. A hierarchical order of feasts

Some writers list the feasts of the liturgical calendar chronologically. De La Salle, on the other hand, with his usual fondness for logical order, lists them according to the importance of the person being honoured.

As O. Windels points out,¹⁸ De La Salle leaves no one in doubt about his wish to establish a proper hierarchical order of feasts: "Although they are all days of obligation, some are more solemn than others, because they were established for the sole purpose of honouring God or the Most Blessed Virgin, and are celebrated with much more solemnity than those of other saints" (CL 22,126 = DC 40,0,3).

be given on the feast of the patron saint of the parishes in which there are schools, as also on certain feast days which [...] are kept in the town or in the parish in this town in which the Institute has a school" (CL 24,200 = CE 17,2,10).

However, in order "not to cut down the number of school days", feast days will be limited: only one feast of St Nicholas will be celebrated, and nowhere will a holiday be given on the feasts of craft patron saints, nor on the patronal feast days of the pupils (CL 24,201 = CE 17,2,15).

De La Salle wishes to ensure there is no confusion between secular feasts and folklore, and genuine Christian worship. The great respect he has for St John the Baptist leads him to add a note of warning when speaking of the bonfires of St John's night (Midsummer night). The Church may allow this way of expressing joy at the birth of this saint, but one should abstain from "superstitions unworthy of a Christian" (CL 22,118-DC 44,5,10).

6. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECT

6.1 Celebrating as the people, in assembly

Speaking about the Christian religion,¹⁹ De La Salle describes it as "a society made up of a very great number of different nations" (this is its catholicity and universality), adding that these persons "have committed themselves to fulfil their duties to God".²⁰ He goes on to say that they pay their homage "in public or in private, in the way Jesus Christ taught them" (CL 20,iiij = DA 0,0,3).

A Christian must not limit his religion to something strictly private. To belong to the true religion, he must also be a Catholic and profess publicly what he believes. He must, moreover, lead a life modelled on that of Jesus and his teachings. We call "Christian Catholics those who perform the external exercises which are most commonly practised in our religion" (CL 20,iiij = DA 0,0,6-7).

Given the fact that Christians belong to a society, this attitude would seem to be only logical. As a society, they assemble and, by the very fact of doing so, they maintain the existence of this society: bonds are weakened in a society that does not assemble. By meeting, members demonstrate that they belong to this society. Finally, a society that has one heart and one soul celebrates the greatness of the God it serves.

What De La Salle says about parish Masses can be applied to other kinds of celebrations also, since the intention of the Church is that the faithful, during parish Masses, "join their voices to those of the clergy to form one choir and one voice of all the voices rising to heaven, in order to draw down the grace and mercy of God on all the assembly of the faithful"²¹ (CL 20,477 = DA 405,2,4).

De La Salle devotes an entire book (CL 22 = DC) to explain, using the catechetical method, what the external and public worship the faithful have to offer

to God consists in, and how to offer it to him.²² He considers it an obligation for Christians to offer God external, visible and effective worship. He says that the Church provides four major ways of giving God external praise:²³

I. Public religious exercises, i.e.: (a) ordinary: parish Masses, Divine Office; (b) less ordinary: processions, confraternities, pilgrimages; (c) extraordinary: public prayers for various needs: 1. Serious problems in the Church; 2. Social evils; 3. Plague of war; 4. Deliverance from epidemics...²⁴

II. Worship includes also well regulated ceremonies (See 2 above) (CL 22,4f = DC 0,1,3 and 10,1).

6.2. Celebrating openly and visibly: processions

For De La Salle, it is essential for the Church to proclaim its faith openly and to celebrate it. We have indicated above the reasons on which he bases this judgment.

In his days, processions were considered to be a very valuable way of demonstrating one's faith. There were three sorts of procession: (a) prayer, to ask help for some urgent need; (b) thanksgiving; (c) penance, to ask forgiveness or humiliate oneself by considering one's sins.

Three reasons were given to justify processions: (a) to honour the journeys Our Lord made on earth for our salvation; (b) to remind us of the obligation we have to follow Jesus and walk in his footsteps; (c) to show that ecclesiastics have to follow Jesus closely, show the faithful the way to virtue by walking before them, and to serve as a model for them (CL 22,12-13 = DC 10,4,2 & 4).

De La Salle describes the seven kinds of procession held in those days, each with its own justification and symbolism.

7. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL ASPECTS

7.1 Celebrating knowing why

The liturgy of the High Mass as a whole seems to be the affirmation of a people on the march — active, organised and united behind its leader. It is a people set aside for God, assembled for praise (symbolised by the incense), summoned to receive the Word of God (homily) and strengthened by its union and charity (symbolised by the blessed bread and the kiss of peace).

All these rites which are part of the parish High Mass and which one might consider as being somewhat peripheral, help to express the profound reality of the Mass, as celebrated in the 17th century.

The people at Mass are the whole Christ. The *Instructions* highlight the unique position of Christ's priesthood in the Church.

The various sacraments with their specific ceremonies are a form of celebration too. De La Salle describes the significance of the ceremonies in detail so as "to inspire the faithful with a very special esteem and veneration for holy Baptism", Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Marriage.²⁵ Regarding the sacrament of Holy Orders, he puts most emphasis on the dispositions necessary for entering the priesthood. As for the Eucharist, he had already explained its ceremonies elsewhere (CL 17 = 1).

It is clear that De La Salle is as far from the utilitarian and rationalising explanation of Claude de Vert as he is from the artificial and complicated allegorical approach which was the standard fare in the Middle Ages. As a rule, his commentary either contains a dogmatic content or tries to indicate the theological foundation for a prayer or a rite in terms that are both sober and vigorous (Br Louis, *Catéchistes*, 1955, p. 305f).

7.2. Celebrating worthily

In addition to understanding the significance of ceremonies, the Christian needs also to learn the dignified external attitude he must adopt when offering public worship to God. When a Brother accompanies his pupils to church, it is his duty to accustom them to have a respectful attitude. The *Conduct of Schools*

provides a ritual intended to make pupils aware of the dignity of the church as soon as they enter it. During Mass, the pupils have to hold up their prayer book "in both hands before their face and look at it". If the meaning of the ceremonies is explained, such an attitude has to be more than simply mechanical and, as we have said before, De La Salle took care to provide these explanations: the faithful knew why they stood up, genuflected or sat down at different times during the celebration.

7.3. Canticles

Contrary to what one may think, canticles were not part of celebrations as they are today. Most of the sung material used in liturgies in France in the time of De La Salle was in Latin and consisted of hymns, Psalms, "Old and New Testament canticles"²⁶ and Latin hymns taken from the proper or ordinary of the Mass. Canticles could be sung at missions, retreats and catechism lessons, but they were not recognised as belonging to celebrations properly so called. They could be used during para-liturgical ceremonies such as those commemorating jubilees or during processions. There is no doubt, however, that canticles were incorporated in church liturgies during devotional exercises, communion outside of Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.²⁷

Certain writers like Pacory, who had Jansenist sympathies, speak very harshly against the use of canticles in church: "If you want to relax with some edifying and spiritual canticles, do so at home or somewhere else, but not in the house of God which is not meant to be used as a place for recreation. Let those who sing in church realise that their songs contain great truths which will perhaps condemn them on the Day of Judgment, and that they sing the praises of God in the presence of God".²⁸

It should perhaps be pointed out that De La Salle's liturgical spirit of celebration was not restricted to his writings, but that it permeated his life as a priest. Blain, in language which can be tediously wordy, as it is in this case, highlights De La Salle's zeal for liturgical celebrations and settings for liturgy which are worthy of the God they are intended to honour (CL 8,233).

De La Salle insists that corporate homage offered to God in the community of believers should be visible. He tries to give motives for it and justification; he tries explain its significance more fully so that external worship can become the expression of interior participation which gives it greater value and enables it to be adoration "in spirit and truth". Blain liked to say that the piety shown by the Brothers' pupils in parish churches edified the faithful (CL 8,235).

We can imagine the kind of teaching difficulties that could arise when the faithful knew no Latin and the children even less. Nowadays, given the profound ignorance of religion among our contemporaries, there are other difficulties which are even more daunting. How can liturgy be made part of the process of educating young people in the faith, when they seem hardly to understand what celebration means, and when the liturgy of the Church is so far removed from "their" idea of celebrating. And yet, big gatherings, such as pilgrimages, meetings at Taizé, gatherings in sports stadia with the Pope, seem to inspire them and make them experience a feeling of being Christians together. The catechesis of handicapped persons also shows the power of evangelisation contained in well prepared celebrations. How do we carry over the impact of the special occasion into everyday life?

The insistence of the Founder on Christ as the mediator of all prayer brings to mind a factor that is essential. His "Second way of placing oneself in the holy presence of God [...] by considering Our Lord present in the midst of those who gather in his name ", although written for the teachers and not for the pupils, is a powerful reminder of the significance of the assembled community: "Is it not a great joy, when we are gathered with our Brothers, to be assured that we are in the company of Our Lord, and that he is in the midst of the Brothers. He is in their midst to give them his Holy Spirit [...], to unite them [...], to teach them his truths and the maxims of the Gospel [...], and so that all their actions may be directed towards Jesus Christ as to their centre [...], and that they may be one in him" (CL 14,9f= EM2,25 to 31).

¹ Paul Broutin shows extensively the multiplicity and diversity of the efforts made to renovate Christian worship (Cf. *La Réforme pastorale en France au XVII^e siècle*, Paris, Desclée, 1956, vol. I, p. 1).

² There is a good list of these in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie* in the article on the Mass. Mgr de Tassy, the bishop of Châlon-sur-Saône (1677-1710) invented a new method. His catechism explains first doctrine and then Christian life. Then the catechism of the mysteries explains dogma and the liturgy within the context of the feast days that occur. Bossuet published a catechism of feast days in 1687. There are also Gambart, Démià, the Langres Catechism...

³ A composer of canticles wrote the following in 1685; "The best minds of those who learn catechism do not understand, for example, the meaning of: human body, food, bloody, invisible and other words people think everybody knows" (Preface, *Catéchisme en cantiques* [Abbé d'Heauville], Châlons, 1681, 16mo (Arsenal, BL 10769).

⁴ O. Windels noted a certain fluctuation in vocabulary regarding this in the catechisms he studied. See bibliography, WINDELS, p. 85.

⁵ LA CHETARDYE, *Catéchisme de Bourges*, II, p. 12. This definition is similar to Beuvelet's: "In general, ceremonies are nothing more than an external act of religion by which we offer God some worship and reverence, and which signifies something interior beneath visible things" (*Instructions sur le manuel*, Antoine Laurens, 1677, p. 51).

⁶ LA CHÉTARDYE, IV, p. 223f.

⁷ The *Duties* in continuous prose (DA) adds the word "adore", which is absent from DC. With the exception of this detail (CL 20,477f = DA 405,2,5f) DA has the same contents as DC regarding the Divine Office.

⁸ De La Salle makes the point that the Church has abandoned some practices in order to help Christians to perform their exercises of piety. He says it in a way that shocks

us a little, but which reveals his religious spirit and his determination to serve the Lord: "The Church has become so lenient in order to make allowance for their weakness and lack of piety, and to give them a reason for not dispensing themselves from performing them" (CL 20,479 = DA 405,2,9). De La Salle has high expectations of the fervor of Christians... even in the 17th century!

⁹ This concern is evident in the *Instructions and Prayers*, the *External and Public Worship* and in the *Duties of a Christian* in continuous prose. These books which were used by the pupils found their way also into the hands of parents who could learn from them also.

¹⁰ *Practice of the Daily Regulation* (CL 25,106,14).

¹¹ The *Conduct of Schools* describes the duties of the Brothers in this connection: explanation of the parish Mass and of the way to attend it well; the communication of a great esteem for the offices of the Church, especially for those held in the parishes (CL 24,95 = CE 8,7).

¹² "The pupils will assemble in the church on Sundays and feast days and they will all be obliged to be there before the beginning of the blessing with holy water" (CL 24,95 = CE 8,7,3).

¹³ According to the *Conduct of Schools* (1706 ms) "outsiders" attend catechism lessons on Sundays and feast days. Outsiders are "those who do not attend the Christian Schools on the days when they function" (CL 24,232 -CE 9,6,1).

¹⁴ It is sufficient to consult CL 18 = E to notice on every page one element or other of this liturgy which has been adapted to the school and which remains faithful to the spirit of the Church.

¹⁵ When we read the *Meditations* of St John Baptist de La Salle for the principal feasts, we notice that these feasts are not very numerous. In the same way, his meditations devoted to the lives and virtues of saints cover only a fraction of the saints in the liturgical calendar. For example, there are only 6 meditations for the 30 days of April.

¹⁶ See CL 20,155 = DA 212,0,10: "It is for the bishops to whom the Church has entrusted its authority within the confines of their diocese [...] to establish feasts [...] and to suppress them".

¹⁷ The feasts proper to the diocese of Rouen — those of St Romain, St Sever and St Yon — are not included in the

regular series of *Meditations for the principal feasts of the year*. And yet, the Rules — *Practice of the Daily Regulation* — included the celebration of the patron saint of parishes "in which the house [...] was located" (CL 25,135). They were not included in the main body of meditations, but in a supplement at the end.

This explains why it is supposed that the work was written before 1705, the date of the Brothers' arrival in Rouen, and after 1698, the year in which the chapel in the Grand'Maison in Paris was dedicated to St Cassian, whose meditation is in the many body of the work (CL 12,155).

¹⁸ See the bibliography (WINDELS, p. 103). Bossuet and Montpellier had a similar concern with some variation.

¹⁹ In the Catholic language of 17th century France, the expression "Christian religion" refers to the Roman Catholic Church as opposed to the "Supposedly reformed religion".

²⁰ Fulfil one's duties = honour, celebrate.

²¹ This statement shows that Windels' (p. 53) is too absolute. He says that the catechism of the three Henry's is the only one to consider worship in a corporate and ecclesial context.

²² See bibliography: DE LA SALLE, *Du culte...* (CL 22).

²³ According to Olivier Windels, De La Salle is in agreement with the other authors of his times, regarding this.

²⁴ In the *Collection*, De La Salle indicates that "the prayers prescribed by the Church for this purpose are always the best" (CL 15,200 = R 16,4,10).

²⁵ CL 20,222; 236; 322; 361; 397 = DA 302,3; 303,2; 307,5; 309,1; 310,5.

²⁶ It is important not to be mistaken about the word *cantique*, even, and especially, in translations of Lasallian texts. It does not have the meaning of spiritual song, but refers to the canticles of the sacred books.

²⁷ How else can we explain the fact that the canticles have the following titles: "Canticle [...] containing the acts to be made when one wishes to communicate", "Canticle for the day on which one has communicated and which can serve as thanksgiving after holy Communion"? (Cf. CL 22,63f at the end of the work = CA 2,25f).

²⁸ PACORY, *Règles chrétiennes*, see bibliography.

Complementary themes

Church
Devotion

Instruction
Mass

Piety
Sacraments

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Introduction and conclusion by Br Alain HOURY

68. CHASTITY

Summary

1. A word about vocabulary.

2. A reference text: the Catechism of the Council of Trent

2.1 .What God forbids 2.2.What God commands 2.3.Means of avoiding sins of impurity.

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3.1 .The 6th Commandment 3.2.The 9th Commandment and impurity.

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5. The concept of chastity in De La Salle's writings

based on his use of certain "key-words": chastity, purity, concupiscence, temptation, nature, body, woman, girl, innocent, honest, dishonest, undressing, indecent, desire, disorder, friend, to kiss, to please, pleasure, nakedness, decency, sex, wine, vow.

6. Conclusion: "To give a Christian education to children" (RC 1,3).

1. A WORD ABOUT VOCABULARY

In this article, I shall use the words "chastity" and "purity" together, because I think they are complementary and because, used together, they express better De La Salle's thinking about this matter.

There is much agreement between the various dictionaries of the Founder's time regarding the definition of chastity and purity. Often they use the same terms. These definitions will give us some idea of how ordinary people understood these words. Both the Furetière and the later Trévoux dictionary define chas-

tity as "a Christian and moral virtue by which one abstains from the illicit pleasures of the flesh and partakes of the legitimate ones with moderation".

Since chastity is defined in terms of abstinence, it would be good to complete this definition by adding to it that of purity, as it was understood in those days. Furetière defines purity as "moral innocence". Trévoux has "moral integrity (morum integritas)", adding that "purity of sentiments and of thoughts gives more gracefulness to eloquence than purity of words".

2. A REFERENCE TEXT: THE CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

Since the Council of Trent had attached such great importance to the catechetical formation of children and adults, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* became an essential reference work, both for preaching and for the composition of the various manuals of catechism which saw the light in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Regarding chastity, the Trent Catechism tries to base itself on scriptural texts, especially from the New Testament. Speaking of the 6th commandment, it says: "You shall not commit adultery".¹

This prohibition gave rise to a whole body of teaching which was either normative or exhortatory. In order not to commit adultery, one must avoid what can encourage or cause it, either directly or indirectly. There is much insistence on the duty of pastors of the Church to inform the faithful "with prudence and caution, in circumspect and respectable terms, and preferably with reticence rather than with an abundance of words". The Catechism goes on to give guidelines, insisting on the importance and necessity of the pastor's work of information and formation.²

2.1. What God forbids³

- Adultery, first of all. Hence the obligation to be pure of mind and body.

- Not only adultery, but also all kinds of impurity and shameful acts (backed up by quotations from the Old and New Testament).⁴

- Finally, all that defiles our body, acts and attitudes opposed to purity of heart and mind.

2.2. What God commands⁵

To preserve chastity and continence, to cleanse ourselves of everything that, by opposing our sanctification in the fear of God, can defile our mind or body.

2.3. Means of avoiding sins of impurity⁶

We must realise how shameful and harmful the vice of impurity is, since those who are impure are excluded from the Kingdom of God, and sin against

their own body and violate its sanctity. Those who go with a prostitute make the members of Jesus Christ members of the prostitute. They desecrate the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is their body. They do an injustice to their partner. They cover themselves with dishonour and opprobrium.

God punishes adultery severely, as Holy Scripture teaches us, by death, illness and unbearable pain. Some suffer blindness of the mind, which is the worst of all evils.

To avoid incurring such serious consequences, the Council of Trent Catechism proposes the following means:

1. Avoid idleness.

2. Avoid an excess of meat and wine because "intemperance of the mouth is the mother of impurity".⁷

3. Do not give too much freedom to the eyes for they can stimulate passion in us.

4. Avoid over tight or sumptuous clothing, gold ornaments which attract attention and lead to impurity (cf. Si 9; 1 P3,3; 1 Tim 2,9).

5. Avoid impure and shameful conversations and words, as well as lascivious songs, dances, books dealing with impure subjects and love, shameful paintings and pictures, anything that can set the hearts of the young aflame with impure love and vile pleasures.

6. Frequent the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, be assiduous in pious prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

7. Repress the sensuality of the body, not only by fasting, but also by vigils, devotional pilgrimages and unpleasant or difficult actions. Love for the virtue of temperance is particularly valuable in this connection.

Such is the doctrine of the Council of Trent. A distinction should be made between what it says and the various commentaries, often accompanied by strict moral injunctions, which subsequently appeared in catechisms and other publications.

3. CHASTITY AND IMPURITY IN DE LA SALLE'S CATECHISMS

3.1. The 6th commandment⁸

It seems fairly clear that De La Salle had the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* close at hand when he composed the *Duties of a Christian*, a work which appeared in 1703. There are many points where the two works are identical, even in their choice of words. The title he puts at the beginning of the section on the 6th commandment is the same as the one in the Catechism: "You shall not commit adultery". Likewise, the prohibition to commit adultery entails the condemnation of all that leads to it: impure actions, thoughts and desires. De La Salle goes on to say that God "forbids all external acts against purity, which are regarded as abominable in various sections of Holy Scripture" (CL 20,133 = DA 208,0,1).

Wishing to be practical and to be understood by his readers, De La Salle explains what are mortal sins and what it is forbidden to say or do against purity:

- To use or listen willingly to impure language.
- To sing lewd songs.
- To read books likely to lead to impurity or unhealthy emotions.
- To take sensual pleasure in looking at paintings, pictures and statues of people who are naked or in indecent postures.
- To look at or kiss a person with impure intentions, or to touch the person indecently.
- To ask a person to be impure by means of words, letters or presents.
- To commit a sin of the flesh with a girl or a married woman. With a relative, this is incest, with a consecrated person, it is a sacrilege.

Before giving absolution, the confessor must instruct the penitent with great prudence so that he:

- avoids occasions that lead to sin: the frequentation of bad company and, more or less, of all female company; avoids very rich clothing, theatres, dancing and idleness.
- confesses frequently to the same pious and enlightened confessor.
- has a very special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin.

Moreover, pastors and confessors must instruct married persons regarding what is allowed and what is forbidden in marriage (CL 20,133f = DA 208).

3.2. The 9th commandment and impurity⁹

Under the heading: "You shall not lust after the wife of your neighbour", De La Salle states clearly that all thoughts and conversations contrary to purity must be rejected. He goes on to say that one must have a very great horror not only of external acts, but also of the smallest voluntary thoughts contrary to the law of God. The remedy he suggests, when bad thoughts come, is to think of God.

Impurity is defined as "a disordered desire for carnal pleasure or the willing enjoyment of such pleasure" (CL 20,172 = DA 214,3,1).

One commits a sin of impurity, therefore, when one takes pleasure in thoughts about impure things, or impure desires, when one does not avoid the occasions which give rise to them, when one says lewd things, when one takes pleasure in talking about these kinds of things, when one listens with pleasure to others speaking about them, when one takes pleasure in reading books about them, when one sings lewd songs, when one looks at things which lead to impurity, when one touches oneself indecently or someone else with impure intentions, when one performs a carnal act outside of marriage.

Effects:

- one is struck with a blindness of the mind (Trent and other catechisms of the time use this same expression),
- one is rejected by God and men,
- this leads to the loss of wealth and health, because of "shameful" diseases.

Means:

- mortification of the body,
- avoidance of occasions of sin,
- avoidance of idleness,
- recourse to the same confessor,
- a special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin.

All this is repeated in almost identical language in DB and in the *Long Summary* (GA). There is no point in examining them.

Regarding chastity, De La Salle drew much of his material from the *Ecole Paroissiale* (1654) by Jacques de Batencour which, like DA, speaks, for example, of "avoiding going to the theatre". De La Salle's work

owes much to the catechisms of Claude Joly (1672), Jean Le Coreur (1683) and Paul Godet des Marais (1698).¹⁰

While the Trent Catechism did not mention specifically the sins of thought and desire, unlike the *Duties* and other catechisms with their strict moral tone, they are certainly implied in statements about certain acts leading to adultery: "By forbidding adultery, God forbids not only all impure actions which can defile our body, but also at the same time those that can defile the purity of our heart and mind".¹¹

The Trent Catechism teaches also that "God obliges us by this commandment to preserve chastity and continence, to cleanse ourselves, as St Paul says, of all

that can defile the body and mind, by completing the work of our purification in the fear of God".¹²

The Trent Catechism emphasises also the role of the pastors of the Church. This is reflected in De La Salle's insistence on frequent confession with "the same pious and enlightened confessor",¹³ and always with prudence and cautiousness (CL 20,135 = DA 208,0,7).

And finally, the Trent Catechism speaks of prayer and devotions, but without specifying anything in particular. De La Salle, on the other hand, insists that devotion to Our Lady is a very special means (CL 20,135 = DA 208,0,7). The *Ecole Paroissiale* and Joly's catechism say the same.

4. CHASTITY IN THE "COMMON RULES"

De La Salle summarised his thinking on chastity for the benefit of the Brothers in a chapter in the *Common Rules*. Like the rest of this work, this chapter is the fruit of a long period of community life and discussions between the Brothers and their Founder. It is the result and synthesis also of recommendations made to the Brothers on the basis of their daily experience.

When we read this chapter we are given a glimpse of the history of the first Brothers regarding chastity. The points that are emphasised are very revealing. Together with Bernard's biography, this is the document which best shows how the question of chastity was dealt with at the beginning of the Institute.¹⁴

The first two articles state with much insistence, possibly because of past problems, that chastity is a norm of the Brothers' life. Those who exteriorly failed seriously against this norm were excluded vigorously from the Institute.

In summary, chapter XIX of the 1718 *Common Rules* opens with the following statement: "The Brothers must be convinced that no one will be tolerated in the Institute in whom anything exterior against chastity appears [...]. For this reason, their first and princi-

pal obligation regarding their exterior will be to make chastity outshine all other virtues in them" (RC 19,1 &2).

For this purpose:

- Much modesty in everything.
- Never let yourself be seen in an indecent state.
- Do not sleep two to a bed, and where necessary, go to bed dressed.
- Do not touch one another.
- Be reserved with persons of the other sex, do not stare at their face, keep your distance, be brief when you speak.

As can be seen, there are many repetitions in this text, it is full of commandments, prohibitions and warnings. The Founder wished to protect the chastity of the Brothers, and basing himself on his own experience and that of the first Brothers, he was convinced that he needed to lay down these laws and so help the establishment of the Institute. In the nine articles of this short chapter of the *Common Rules*, there are six "do not" and four "never".

5. THE CONCEPT OF CHASTITY IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS BASED ON HIS USE OF CERTAIN "KEY-WORDS"

De La Salle's views about chastity are contained in four different types of written works:

- doctrinal and pastoral: *Duties of a Christian* (DA, DB, DC, GA, PA), *Exercises of Piety, Instructions and Prayers*;

- pedagogical: *Conduct of Schools and Rules of Politeness and Christian Civility*;

- spiritual: *Meditations* (MD, MF, MR), *Collection, Letters, Memoir on the Habit, Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*;

- legislative: *Common Rules, Rule of the Brother Director*.

Chastity, chaste, chastely

These words are used 46 times in the Founder's writings: 28 times in his doctrinal works, 11 in spiritual texts written for the Brothers, most of which in the MF, highlighting the chastity of the saints (MF 101,1; 129,1).

"You will preserve chastity by very great recollection" is one of the ten commandments kept by the Founder in the *Common Rules* (RC 16,8). It is the basic maxim which summarises all the guidelines and recommendations given to the Brothers. For the rest, there are few texts in which these words appear, although the Founder stresses in various ways that chaste bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Purity, impurity, pure, impure, purely

Words referring to "purity" are used 260 times: 125 times in doctrinal writings, 115 in spiritual, and 20 in pedagogical. Those referring to "impurity" are used 97 times in all: 75 times in doctrinal writings, 17 in spiritual, and 5 in pedagogical.

In many instances, the word pure means simple, total, exclusive, as for example in "pure motive" or "pure devotion". Elsewhere, De La Salle speaks of the "pure love of God" (MD 12,1), or of "pure intention" (CL 20,IX - DA 0,0,15), as when he writes: "Have entirely pure intentions in your employment" (MR 196,3). He speaks of prayer of "pure or simple attention" (CL 14,33 = EM 3,112) and recalls that "piety without humility is pure hypocrisy" (CL 15,172 = R 15,8,1). The same neutral connotation occurs in

"pure heart" (CL 15,52 = EM 5,159,5) or in a 'Victim pure, holy and pleasing to God", as well in the use of the adverb purely: "Instruct your disciples in the truths of the Gospel purely for the love of God" (MR 207,2); "Correction must be given purely for the glory of God" (CL 24,15 = CE 15,3,2); "purely human obedience" (CL 15,23 - R 7,2,8).

As for purity, he speaks in very positive terms of purity of heart on several occasions: "Ask Jesus Christ for great interior and exterior purity, and a profound humility" (CL 22,137 = DC.42,1,5); "To possess the purity your state demands" (MF 118,2); "Zeal for instruction and purity of morals" (MR 206,3).

De La Salle normally uses the word "impurity" in his doctrinal writings when referring to the vice contrary to chastity, no doubt in view of their use in catechesis, as we have already indicated, and in keeping with the terminology of the day.

In his spiritual writings, the moderate language reveals De La Salle to us as the spiritual director who advises his Brothers with affection, no doubt helped in this by his knowledge of them and his experience in the confessional.

Concupiscence

This word is used 13 times in the writings of the Founder: 8 times in his doctrinal writings, and 5 in his *Meditations*. There is no dramatic element in his language. He points out simply that concupiscence which is born and lives in us is the cause of all evil, and that God preserved Our Lady from it.

Temptation

The word "temptation" is used 159 times: 92 times in doctrinal writings, and 67 times in spiritual writings intended for the Brothers. Although most often temptation against purity is not specified, the context leads us to suppose that this is meant. In other cases, he tends to name the temptation as being against faith, to be proud, against chastity (CL 20,408 & 411 = DA 401,4,7 & 11; CL 21,288 - DB 4,9,10). To overcome them, "one must tell one's confessor about them" (CL 21,287 = DB 4,9,8) and thank God when one overcomes them (CL 21,46 = DB 4,1,7).

De La Salle tells a Brother in a letter that temptations against purity should not worry him (LA 34,22). Elsewhere, he recalls the words of Jesus Christ telling us not to fear temptations (CL 20,30 = DA 104,2,8), invites the Brothers to imitate the example of the saints who overcame temptations (MF 111,1; 128,2) and devotes a whole meditation to temptations against purity and the means to overcome them (MD 66).

Nature, natural

The noun "nature" is used 148 times: 80 times in the doctrinal writings, 14 in the pedagogical (RB) and 54 in the spiritual. The adjective "natural" is used 92 times: 31 times in the doctrinal writings, 25 in the pedagogical and 36 in the spiritual.

The word "nature" has a variety of meanings in De La Salle's writings: the nature of things, the human and divine nature of Jesus, the unique nature of the persons of the Holy Trinity, the nature of the sacraments, the nature created by God which is good. De La Salle uses it also when speaking of "the inclinations of corrupt nature" (CL 17,212 = 13,36,2) and of its "repugnance" (CL 14,64 & 100 = EM 8,192,5 & 12,269) which must be mortified (MD 45,2,2). One should not seek the comforts of nature (CL 14,111 = EM 15,299), but one should free oneself of sentiments suggested by nature (MD 9,2,2), destroy in oneself the movements of nature (MD 31,1,2), not follow the movements of nature in anything (MF 123,3), not look upon things with the eyes of nature (CL 15,78 = R 11,2,5), deprive oneself of what nature seeks (CL 15,106 & 110 = R 13,1,2 & 13,8,2).

The adjective "natural" sometimes means "normal". One should pronounce in a natural way (CL 24,28 = CE 3,2,20); St Sulpice performed "acts of piety in a natural way" (MF 98,1); as did St Hilarion (MF 180,2). In society, ceremonies should not depart from the natural (CL 19,227 = RB 207,6,581). One meets children who are "gentle by nature" (CL 24,164 = CE 15,6,28). "Holiness is natural in God" (CL 21,157 = DB 3,3,3).

De La Salle condemns what is natural when it opposes the supernatural. One should "free oneself of even natural attachments" (CL 14,35 = EM 3,120), "stifle natural sentiments and affections" (CL 14,40 = EM 4,132,3). It could happen that in mental prayer, "having only natural and human thoughts, we draw

no benefit from it" (CL 14,57 = EM 6,170). Elsewhere he writes: "This fear, being quite natural, does not come from God" (CL 17,108 = I 2,2,5). "Do you not see that such a request is completely natural?" (LA 52,9). One must renounce "one's own mind and natural inclinations" (MD 13,3); we meet sometimes "a completely natural and a completely human obedience, which has nothing religious about it and is not meritorious in the eyes of God" (MD 14,3).

The terms "nature" and "natural" do not, therefore, refer to impurity or chastity. They have a very broad meaning, embracing either the human person in all his aspects, or the more restricted meaning of the inclination of corrupt nature which is opposed to God's plans, seeking its own satisfaction in the place of what God proposes.

Body, bodily

The word "body" occupies an important place in De La Salle's language. It is used 851 times, and "bodily" 21 times. Body is the noun most used after God, duty, sin, Jesus Christ, thing, grace, day, Church, spirit, time, soul, person, sacrament and man. It is used 574 times in the doctrinal writings, 192 times in the pedagogical and 185 in the spiritual. The adjective bodily is used 17 times in the spiritual writings and 4 in the spiritual.

In the doctrinal texts, he uses the word "body" when speaking of the creation of man and, in general, of the truths of religion related to the body, seen as God's creature: "Our soul and our body belong equally to God" (CL 20,106 = DA 203,0,3). De La Salle speaks of veneration for "the relics of saints, that is, for their bodies" which have "contributed to the sanctification of their souls" (CL 20,11 If=DA 203,0,13). He speaks of "the body of the Church" (CL 20,112 = DA 203,0,16); he says "the body must be respected" (CL 20,403 - DA 310,5,15); God gives us "the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ" (CL 20,261 = DA 305,1,1). He speaks also of "how the body can sin against the 6th commandment", a sin that defiles the body (CL 21,101 = DB 2,8,7). For this reason he stresses "austerity of life and mortification of the body" (CL 22,256 = DC 44,12,3).

De La Salle speaks of the body in his spiritual writings as of something that should be offered to God: "Chaste bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit" (CL 14,18 = EM 2,59); "Make their heart and their body

living tabernacles" (MD 26,1); "Considering God in our bodies as in his temple, [...] keeping my body very pure, [...] to offer you my body as a living host, [...] to think of my body as being consecrated to you" (CL 14,40 = EM 4,133).

He writes to a Brother: "I think you are more ill in your mind than in your body" (LA 43,5). In his meditation for the feast of St Francis of Paula he speaks about his austere life: "We must hate our bodies and treat them very strictly" (MF 113,3).

In his pedagogical writings, De La Salle praises the well-regulated and dignified human body, and describes the postures school children should be taught: "The way of learning to maintain the body in a good posture" (CL 24,54 = CE 4,6); "They should keep their body upright" (CL 24,129 = CE 12,4,2). In RB, he speaks of the care to be taken of "the different parts of the body" (CL 19,1 = RB 101,1,16), caring for "the cleanliness of the body as an external and visible sign of purity of soul" (CL 19,6 = RB 102,1,26). One must avoid "contorting the body or stretching out indecently" (CL 19,4 = RB 101,1,22). In dancing, "the body is dishonoured by shameful postures" (CL 19,155 = RB 205,5,410).

In summary, De La Salle shows much respect for the body and all his language demonstrates that his mind is in harmony with his body. There may be some austerity in what he says, but no rigorism: he wished both the Brothers and pupils to impress others by the dignity of their bodies, according to the wishes of God the creator.

Woman

The word "women" is used 172 times in De La Salle's writings: 111 times in the doctrinal writings, 33 in the pedagogical and 28 in the spiritual.

In the doctrinal writings, women are simply mentioned in references to the Old and New Testament and in the enumeration of the obligations of marriage. De La Salle applies to the women of his day the behaviour described in the Bible, speaking of "the submission of the wife to her husband", and noting that "the best ornaments of a woman were her decency and her modesty" (CL 20,402 = DA 310 5,13).

In the pedagogical writings (RB) De La Salle says that "women should be given the lowest seats to give them more comfort" (CL 19,4 = RB 101,1,23). He speaks also of "women of quality" (CL 19,6 & 61 =

RB 102,1,29 & 203,1,165). For the rest, he follows the teachings of St Paul.

In his spiritual writings, De La Salle praises the holiness and exemplary life of several holy women, and in a special way, that of the Most Blessed Virgin. Speaking to the Brothers, however, he prescribes reserve that is close to being rigoristic: "Have a horror of all familiarity with women" (MF 111,2). "No woman or girl will be allowed to enter the school for whatever reason, unless it is to visit the poor children and provided they are accompanied by the parish priest or by some other ecclesiastic entrusted with the care of the poor of the town" (RC 9,20).

Girl

A consideration of the word "girl" will complete what we said about woman. It is used 58 times by De La Salle: 36 times in his doctrinal writings, 7 times in his pedagogical and 15 in his spiritual. In line with the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, De La Salle speaks of sins of thought and acts with girls in his *Duties*, setting out clearly his moral doctrine. In this he follows the example of the catechisms of his day, repeating in his own way what they and the Trent catechism say. In RB, he recommends parents to protect their children from danger. He has great reservations about dancing, considered by Trent as a cause of impurity. Most contemporary catechisms advise against dancing. He has reservations, mistrusts and warns against going with persons of the other sex, and warns against sins of the eyes.

In his recommendations to the Brothers, the Founder adopts a rigoristic attitude, at least, it seems so to us: "The Brother Director will not allow any woman or girl to enter the house, and he will not speak with any in the parlour of the house unless he is accompanied by another Brother" (CL 25,156 = FD 1,19). He gave an example of this himself by refusing permission to his grandmother to enter his room when he was ill (CL 8,249).

De La Salle's attitude to women might seem rigoristic nowadays. He says, in fact, that the frequentation of persons of the other sex is a cause of impurity (CL 20,134 = DA 208,0,4) and he adds in RB: "It is indecent to look at the breast of a woman, and even more to touch it, and it is not even allowed to look her in the face" (CL 19,44 = RB 113,1,123).

If we look at the Trent Catechism, we find similar language, when it says we should turn our eyes away when we see a well-dressed woman, or one wearing a clinging dress. The same thing can be found in the catechisms of Batencour, Joly and Le Coreur.

Innocent, innocence

Both these words together are used 46 times: 21 times in doctrinal writings, 2 in pedagogical, and 23 in spiritual. De La Salle speaks of the state of innocence of humanity before original sin, and of the innocence of children and other persons. For the Brothers, "the spirit of their institute consists in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children, and for bringing them up in the fear of God, inducing them to preserve their innocence if they have not lost it, and inspiring them with a great aversion and horror for sin and whatever might cause them to lose purity" (RC 2,9). The *Meditations* stress the part the Brothers must play in "preserving the innocence" of the children (MD 62,1; cf. MF 110,3); on the feast of the Holy innocents, he exhorts the Brothers "to honour the innocence of these holy children" (MF 89,1). Elsewhere he says: "You must be a model of innocence" (MD 69,2) and "What a grace and what an advantage it was for this saint to have led such an innocent life" (MF 162,2). For the Founder, the happiness of the Christian educator derives from his zeal for preserving the innocence of children: "This is the happiness of heaven that will be enjoyed by those who have procured the salvation of others, who have done this in a way that has been useful to the general good of the Church, who have by their care restored the robe of innocence to a great number of their disciples that may have lost it through sin, and have helped to preserve the innocence of many others who have never lost it" (MR 208,3).

There is not the least doubt that the primary objective De La Salle had in mind when establishing the Christian Schools was the instruction and Christian education of children and the preservation of their innocence.

Honest, honesty, honestly

These three words together are used 211 times in all: 5 times in the doctrinal writings, 189 times in the

pedagogical (RB) and 17 in the spiritual. For De La Salle, they meant educated, suitable, honourable, reasonable.

Dishonest, dishonesty, dishonestly

These terms are used 69 times: 60 times in the doctrinal writings and 9 in the pedagogical (especially RB). They are not used in the spiritual writings. Compared with the preceding terms, these have a totally different connotation. If honest meant educated, dishonest clearly means indecent. It is almost always used in contexts such as "dishonest words, songs, looks, touching" (CL 24,158 = CE 208,0,4; Da 133 = DA 200,0,2); or "desiring and thinking about pleasures or dishonest things" (CL20,172f = DA214,3,1); or "dishonest postures and gestures" (CL 21,100 = DB 2,8,3).

Undressing, undressing oneself

These words are used only 11 times, especially in RB, to indicate the way to help the priest take off his liturgical vestments after Mass, to indicate the prayers to say when dressing and undressing, to indicate how to lay out one's clothes tidily, not to undress in the presence of another person, and how to undress when one has to sleep in the same room as someone else.

Indecent, indecency, indecently

These terms are used 71 times in De La Salle's writings: 4 in the doctrinal writings, 63 times in the pedagogical (especially in RB), and 4 times in the spiritual.

Here, "indecent" means unsuitable, badly brought up. De La Salle (especially in RB) considers the following as indecent: frowning, chewing tobacco, yawning without covering the mouth, showing a bare chest, pressing the knees together, moving one's feet often, dragging one's feet, sitting down on a bed, bursting out laughing, allowing oneself to be seen in an unsuitable manner... He considers it "very indecent" to look at a woman's breast (CL 19,44 = RB 113,1,123), at a time when mothers lacked anywhere private to suckle their babies. It is in this context that chapter XXI of the *Common Rules* on modesty should be considered.

Desire

De La Salle uses the word "desire" 172 times: 117 in his doctrinal writings, 2 only in his pedagogical, and 53 times in his spiritual. There is first of all the desire to fulfil God's will, the human desire to do good, and finally evil desires, impure desires, the desires of the flesh.

In the doctrinal texts we find "the ardent desire to do the will of God" (CL 20,96 - DA 201,2,7), "an ardent desire to satisfy" God and the justice of God (CL 20,276 & 278 = DA 306,0,4 & 9), "a great desire to gain indulgences" (CL 20,346 = DA 307,8,19), "the ardent desire to obtain what one has asked for in prayer" (CL 21,254 - DB 4,3,8), "the desire to enjoy God as soon as possible" (CL 20,347 = DA 307,8,20).

In the spiritual writings intended more particularly for the Brothers, De La Salle speaks of "the desire that Jesus Christ had to suffer and to die" for us (MD 25) and "the desire to unite yourself with him" (MD 26,3), like St Magdalen of Pazzi, whose "most ardent desire was to imitate the life and passion of Christ" (MF 130,3). He praises also St Anthony of Padua's great desire for martyrdom (MF 135,2).

De La Salle sometimes intends this word to mean the desires of the flesh (CL 20,148 = DA 211,0,4). "God is offended by bad thoughts and bad desires" (CL 20,151 - DA 211,0,10). "Impurity is a disordered desire for pleasures of the flesh" (CL 20,172 = DA 214,3,1).

It should be said that De La Salle was a man with great and noble desires which inspired his work: the desire for God's glory, to save souls, to provide education for the sons of the artisans and the poor, etc.

Disorder

This word occurs 41 times: 19 times in the doctrinal writings, 9 in the pedagogical and 13 in the spiritual. It refers both to material disorder in school, for example, and to moral disorder in one's life or in society. It does not refer explicitly to chastity in a concrete or specific way. "All disorders, especially among the artisans and the poor, come normally from the fact that they have been left to their own devices, and were very badly brought when they were young" (RC 1,6).

Friend, friendship, particular friendship

These terms occur 84 times: 37 times in the doctrinal writings, 23 times in the pedagogical (especially in RB), and 22 times in the spiritual.

The word "friend" did not have the strong emotional content it has nowadays: it meant companion or colleague. Pilate wished "to remain a friend of Caesar", that is, not lose his favour (CL 20,47 = DA 104,8,8). "Friendship" described a good close relationship. De La Salle writes of loving one's friends and one's enemies, and of being friends and sons of God. "God is the friend of the humble" (CL 14,95 = EM 11,255). He speaks of "praying for the repose of the souls of deceased parents, friends and benefactors" (CL 17,64 = I 1,7,50). He uses friend also in a more intimate context: "Speaking with him heart to heart, and like a friend who tells his secrets to his very close friend [...] a God who treats me as a friend" (CL 17,275 = 16,27,1). God has his own language "which he uses only with his friends" (MD 64,2). "You are in a state in which you need to be honoured with the friendship of Jesus" (MF 88,1).

De La Salle does not give the expression "special friendship" the moral connotation it acquired later. "A kiss [...] is exchanged normally only by persons who have a special friendship" (CL 19,196 = RB 206,3,440). He has praise for St Luke who had "a very special friendship" for the Apostle Paul, and he recommends the Brothers to have this same close friendship (MF 178,2).

De La Salle required the Brothers to treat all their pupils equally, saying: "They will love all their pupils tenderly but will not become familiar with any one of them and will never give them anything through particular friendship, but only as a reward or encouragement" (RC 7,13). Despite saying this, he recommends the Brothers to have greater affection for the poor "because they are more especially entrusted to the Institute with these" than with the rich (RC 7,14). He speaks in the same way about persons outside the Institute: "The Brothers will honour all outsiders with whom they have to deal, but without forming a friendship with any of them" (RC 14,2).

He says something similar to the Brother Director; "He will not maintain nor form a particular friendship with any of the Brothers or outsiders, treating all equally, and he will never give anything to a Brother

through friendship, nor more to one than to another, however little this may be" (CL 25,156 = FD 1,22).

To kiss, a kiss

The word "kiss" is used 63 times, 40 times as a verb and 23 times as a noun. It is used 46 times in the doctrinal writings, 14 in the pedagogical (especially in RB), and 3 in the spiritual. He speaks of the kiss as a sign of respect: kissing the hand of a priest when serving Mass, kissing the altar, the instrument of peace, the crucifix, etc. He speaks also of the sensual aspect of the kiss, saying clearly: "It is a mortal sin to kiss a person for a bad reason" (CL 20,133 = DA 208,0,3). The same judgment is given by the Trent Catechism and the others we have mentioned.

To please, to be pleased

Of the 174 occasions when this verb is used in either the active or the passive voice, 57 occur in the doctrinal texts, 12 in the pedagogical (especially in RB), and 105 in the spiritual.

It is used frequently with the meaning of pleasing God and accepting what he sends us: "Do you practice St Paul's lesson well, being as much pleased by famine as by abundance?" (CL 15,205 = R 16,5,12). He speaks of the desire to please only God (CL 14,77 = EM 8,218,4). "The desire that I have to please you alone" (CL 14,126 = EM 20,338,4). In the Rules we read: "They will take care to keep constant watch over themselves, so as not to perform, as far as is possible, any action from natural impulse, custom or some human motive. Instead they will ensure that they do them all by the guidance of God, by the movement of his Spirit and with the intention of pleasing him" (RC 2,6). Speaking of their employment, De La Salle says: "We must do everything [...] not to please men, but God. You must concern yourself only with him, and this is the only motive God wants you to have in your employment" (MR 206,3). He says that God wishes "to find pleasure and satisfaction in supporting us and in preserving our being" (CL 14,13 = EM 2,43), "takes pleasure in communicating with pure souls" (MD 18,2) and "distributes all his gifts [...] when it pleases him" (MF 151,2). "Our Lord was born poor, loved the poor and took pleasure in being with them" (MR 202,2).

In DA we find the expressions "to take pleasure in thinking about dishonest things [...] to take pleasure in reading books which treat of them" (CL 20,172 = DA 214,3,1). On the whole, however, what is most apparent is the eminently mystical and positive character of the Founder's terminology, which occasionally can have moral connotations.

Pleasure

The noun "pleasure" is used 220 times in the writings of De La Salle: 113 in his doctrinal writings, 11 in the pedagogical (RB), and 98 in the spiritual.

In most cases when De La Salle speaks of pleasure, he is speaking of the sensual pleasure of the flesh, that is shameful, disordered, carnal. In the doctrinal texts, he gives directives regarding looks, touching. Elsewhere, he speaks of "the pleasure of hearing God being spoken about" (CL 21,53 = DB 1,12,7). "May all my pleasure consist in filling my heart with your holy love" (CL 17,92 = 11,8,42). "Your whole pleasure consists in having mercy" (CL 17,88 = I 1,8,35). "This view of faith gives so much pleasure and joy to a soul" (MD 70,3). "Nothing will give us more pleasure" than conversing with God (MF 98,1). He writes to a Brother: "Your kind heart gave me much pleasure" (LA 32,7). He speaks also of "the pleasure of serving others" (CL 14,196 = EM 14,287,2). "It is not allowed to lie in order to give pleasure to others" (CL 21,109 = DB 2,10,7).

After his conversion, St Augustine "discovered unimaginable joy and pleasure in renouncing the pleasures of even simply worldly people" (MF 123,2). "Those who love their state find only pleasure in it" (MF 98,1). "If the world knew how much pleasure there is in retreat!" (MF 105,1), and he adds elsewhere: "He [Jesus Christ] wanted the rich and those who have their pleasures in this world to be regarded as unfortunate" (MR 196,2). "Humans are naturally so much inclined to sin that they seem to find no other pleasure than committing it. This appears to be particularly true of children, because their minds have not developed yet and they are not capable of much serious reflection. They seem to have no other inclination than to satisfy themselves, their senses, their natural drives" (MR 203,2).

Naked, nakedness

These words are used 35 times: 4 times in the doctrinal writings, 20 in the pedagogical, and 11 in the spiritual.

We read of baring the head for prayer (CL 21,303 = DB 4,13,10), of St Benedict who, in order to overcome temptations against purity, rolled around naked in the thorns and briars (MF 111,2), of St Bernard who threw himself naked into a frozen pond (MF 158,1), and of other saints walking barefooted. In the *Rules of Politeness* we read that one ought to have one's neck, ears and hands bare. From the moral point of view, De La Salle tells us it is "a mortal sin to look with sensual pleasure at statues which are in some way nude" (CL 20,133 = DA 208,0,2). In other texts of the Founder, "nakedness" means the lack of everything, which "would not be enough to separate us from the love of Christ" (MD 49,2).

Decency (in the sense of Modesty)

The 21 times De La Salle uses this word —*pudeur*, in French — it has one meaning only, that of reserve. One should not act "in a way contrary to decency" (CL 17,228 = I 4,6,2). In order to preserve chastity, "they will show great decency in everything" (RC 19,3). Touching one another is "contrary to the respect they owe one another, as well as against decency and modesty" (RC 19,6). "The most beautiful ornaments of a woman are decency and modesty [...]. Decency must always precede marriage" (CL 20,402 = DA310,5,13f).

Sex

The word "sex" is used 26 times in the writings of the Founder: 11 times in the doctrinal writings, 8 in the pedagogical, and 7 in the spiritual.

In his days, the frequentation of persons of the opposite sex was not approved of. He himself wrote: "Pupils who play with persons of the other sex will be punished" (CE 158, 1720 edition). "The principal occasions which lead us to this miserable sin [against the 6th commandment] are [...] the frequentation of persons of the other sex" (CL 20,134 = DA 208,0,5). He tells us that St Benedict avoided carefully persons of the other sex (MF 111,2), and that St Gregory of Nazienzen was careful "to avoid persons of the other

sex, persuaded that this was one of the occasions which contributed to make us commit sin" (MF 126,1).

In RB, De La Salle is very concise and clear: one should not look persons of the other sex in the face (CL19,19 = RB 106,1,60); one should not allow "any person of the other sex to enter the bedroom" of an unmarried person (CL 19,51 - RB 201,1,140), nor should one "go to bed in the presence of a person of the other sex", unless one is married to that person (CL 19,53 = RB 201,1,144).

De La Salle is just as specific in the Common Rules: "When a person of the other sex comes to visit one of the Brothers, even the Brother Director, there will always be another Brother present as a witness and to see what happens during all this time" (RC 14,6). "When they speak to persons of the other sex, they will always step back a few paces and never look at them directly in the face" (RC 19,9).

Wine

This word is used 180 times in De La Salle's writings: 147 times in the doctrinal writings, 16 in the pedagogical (RB), and 17 in the spiritual.

It is used often with reference to the Eucharist or Gospel events (wedding at Cana, MD 8,1). In line with the Trent Catechism, De La Salle warned against the use of wine.¹⁵ In RB, as St Paul, he speaks of "the fatal result of an excess of wine, which leads to impurity" (CL 19,78 = RB 204,0,205). "One should not encourage others to drink wine" (CL 19,91 = RB 204,3,239). "It is not proper to show that one is knowledgeable about wines" (CL 19,120 = RB 204,9,318). "Propriety requires that much water is always mixed with wine" (CL 19,121 = RB 204,9,321). Elsewhere he advises that wine should be drunk in moderation (CL 20,177 - DA 214,5,4). In the *Rule of the Brother Director* he indicates the measure of wine that should be served to the Brothers at each meal (CL 25,161 = FD 3,4). He mentions St Francis Xavier who did not eat meat or drink wine (MF 79,1). In the Collection he writes: "Beware of wine because it leads to impurity [...], always add a lot of water" (CL 15,182 = R 15,12,2; cf. 205 = 16,5,11). "Let them be careful to mix a lot of water with their wine and to drink it in great moderation" (CL 15,131 = RD 2,4).

Vow

Used 68 times, 38 in the doctrinal writings and 30 in the spiritual, this word does not occur in the pedagogical writings.

In the *Duties* we are informed about the nature of vows. In the spiritual writings, intended for the Brothers, De La Salle takes into account the vows that some Brothers have pronounced (RC 23,12), but does not mention the vow of chastity in particular.

Certain Brothers pronounced "the vows of obedience, association and stability" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,4). In the *Collection*, the Founder specifies the obligations they undertook at the time (CL 15,2f = R 2). In his meditations, he speaks of the vow of virginity of St Genevieve (MF 95,1), of St Catherine of Siena (MF 118,1) and of St Magdalen of Pazzi (MF 130,1). He mentions likewise the vow of chastity made by Iphigenia, the daughter of the King of Ethiopia, and the vow of perpetual chastity taken by the Most Blessed Virgin (MF 191,1).

6. CONCLUSION: "TO GIVE A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TO CHILDREN" (RC 1,3)

In the writings of St John Baptist de La Salle, in the catechisms written by his contemporaries, and in their common source, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, one can detect, where chastity is concerned, a mentality preoccupied with the chastisement of the body and of the mind, with a voluntaristic mastery of sexual desire and a certain mistrust of instinct. The chastity involved here is militant: its aim is "to avoid all defilement", and it is based on the conviction that our bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit".

By concentrating on the fear of defilement or of impurity, this mentality comes very close to that of the Old Testament. A New Testament mentality would be expressed in more positive terms, as for example: "An attitude by which a person listens honestly to the Word of God. The vision of God is promised to the pure of heart (Mt 5,8). Chastity is the virtue which, by detaching the mind from the disorder of carnal passions, enlightens it, purifies it and makes it sensitive to spiritual things. It is a necessary disposition for contemplative life and is also one of its effects".¹⁶

While not hiding the extent to which the Founder, together with his contemporaries, had an attitude which concentrated on avoiding sin and its occasions, we can appreciate the numerous positive aspects of his teaching and, basically, that purity of soul enables us to draw close to God. If one fled from worldly ways and superficiality, to use the language of the day, it was to avoid impurity and, as a consequence, "spir-

itual blindness", since whatever defiles the body defiles the heart and the mind also. According to the Trent Catechism, this blindness was the worst of all punishments.¹⁷

It has to be said, however, that De La Salle was not obsessed with the question of chastity. This is seen clearly from the positive and serene language he uses, as our analysis of his vocabulary has shown. Quite simply, his mentality is in line with that of his time and with the moral doctrine that was then taught in the Church.

Those who look for a modern-style treatise on morality and psychology in De La Salle's writings will be disappointed. The Founder uses language that is clear, simple, precise and voluntaristic, stating what should be done, what should be forbidden, and what should be avoided at all costs.

Some of his writings could hurt modern-day sensibilities. There is, for example, chapter XIX of the *Common Rules*, with all its prohibitions. One needs to remember, however, when reading this text, that a person's mentality reflects the context of the age in which he lives, and the way persons behave in that context. The first Brothers were young, had only a short period of formation which was thought appropriate for them as persons and for the schools in which they would teach. What is more, the mentality of the age was more voluntaristic than it is today, and less given to theorizing.

History has shown that both the *Rules* and De La Salle's other normative or educational texts were efficacious in the formation of the Brothers, for the strengthening of the Institute and the exercise of its mission. Each period of history needs its own guidelines. In De La Salle's writings, we should see a man of God, a spiritual director, the superior of the Brothers

ers who founded an Institute "to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that schools are conducted. In them, the children are looked after by the teachers from morning till night. In this way, the teachers can teach them to lead good lives, by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and so give them the education they need" (RC 1,3).

¹ Cf. *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (quotations taken from a French edition: *Le Catéchisme du concile de Trente*, Paris, 1702), p. 485.

² Cf. *Id.*, p. 486.

³ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 486-488.

⁴ These are some of the texts quoted by the Trent Catechism, p. 487: "The will of God is that you should be holy, that you should abstain from fornication" (1 Co 5,9). "Let there be no talk among you of fornication or of any other impurity" (Ep 5,3). "Do not be mistaken, neither the impure, nor the adulterers will inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Co 6,18).

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 488-489.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 489-494.

⁷ Trent quotes Ep 5,18: "Do not get drunk on wine from which all disorders come: fill yourselves rather with the Spirit".

⁸ Cf. *Duties of a Christian*, CL 20,133-136 = DA 208.

⁹ Cf. *Id* CL 20,147-151 & 172-174 = DA 211 & 214,3.

¹⁰ See the thesis of Manuel FERNANDEZ MAGAZ, *Un catecismo del Gran Siglo Frances, Los deberes de un Cristiano*, Madrid, 1968 (of which a summary in French exists), and Jean PUNGIER, *Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Le message de son catéchisme*, Rome, 1984.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p. 488: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old: 'You shall not commit adultery'. I say to you that whoever looks at a woman and lusts after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5,28). And regarding confession, Trent says: "Since all mortal sins, even of thought, make men the sons of anger (Ep 2,3) and enemies of God, it is indispensable to ask pardon of God for all these sins also in a complete and truthful confession" (Denzinger 899).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹³ "With the same confessor", writes Claude JOLY, *Les devoirs du chrétien*, 6th edition, Paris, 1677, p. 143.

¹⁴ As early as 1687, it appears that the Brothers expressed a wish to make the vow of chastity, but De La Salle dissuaded them from doing so. Here is how Bernard describes what happened:

M. de La Salle "turned his attention to taking measures with his Brothers to provide stability for those who already were and for those who would be in the Institute. That is why he began a retreat with them, on the day of Pentecost in the year 1687, according to a practice which has remained to this day. It was on this holy day that the new successors of the Apostles, in their zeal and poverty, prepared themselves to receive the fulness of the grace of the Holy Spirit, without which they would not be able to take any good decisions, and without which they were not able to overcome all the obstacles which they could encounter [...].

"Having thus prepared themselves to receive the Holy Spirit on the same day as the Apostles received him, they also were filled with him. This was shown by the decision they took to consecrate themselves totally to God by the vow of obedience and chastity. But before they did so, they conferred together to see if they would take the vow of chastity, as some suggested, and if they would make their vow for their whole life or for a period only.

"The man of God, who had very strong reasons, as one can easily guess, for wishing to dissuade them from making perpetual vows of obedience, and even more so, a vow of chastity so soon, suggested that they should do nothing in a hurry, and that it was necessary to wait a little longer in order to see if it was the will of God.

"The Brothers, having heard the reasons of their superior, moderated the fire of their first fervour and decided they would make the vow of obedience for only a year. And this is what they did on the Sunday of the Most Blessed Trinity" (CL 4,72f, see also CL 2,12f).

¹⁵ Cf. *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p. 492: "Always avoid excess in eating and in drinking wine, drunkenness and good food. I have showered them with good

things, says God, through his prophet, and they have abandoned themselves to impurity (Jr 5,7). In fact, intemperance of the mouth is the mother of impurity [...]. The Apostle teaches us; Do not allow yourselves to indulge excessively in wine from which arise disorders" (Ep 5,18).

¹⁶ *Dictionnaire des mots de la foi chrétienne*, Paris, Cerf, 1987.

¹⁷ Cf. *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p. 491. De La Salle writes (CL 20,173 = DA 214,3,2) that the impure "fall into blindness of the mind, with the result that they listen neither to reason nor to advice. Without consideration for anything else, they remain intent on satisfying their passions". The expression "blindness of the mind" can be found also in Joly's catechism, p. 142, and in that of Le Coreur, p. 192.

Complementary themes

Catechism	Duties of a Christian	Mortification
Conduct	Goodness-tenderness	Sin
Consecration	Hearts (To touch)	Vows
	Love - charity	World

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69. COMMUNITY, SOCIETY, INSTITUTE

Summary

1. A word about vocabulary.

2. The formation of the Community of Brothers (1679-1694)

2.1.A providential meeting 2.2."Teachers from our Community" 2.3.The first vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools 2.4.A Community in crisis.

3. The Society of the Christian Schools (1694-1705)

3.1 The first perpetual vows 3.2.An ecclesiastical superior imposed from outside.

4. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1705-1719)

4.1 The "Rules" of the Institute 4.2.Towards recognition by the Holy See 4.3.The risk of fragmentation in the Institute.

5. The spiritual nature of the community in De La Salle's writings

5.1.Rooted in faith 5.2."Work of God" 5.3.Founded on Providence 5.4.Led by the Spirit

6. Conclusion : a community in the image of the Trinity.

7. Note: Important role of the community in the 1987 Rule.

We shall begin with a few words about vocabulary and (then, adopting an historical approach, we propose to examine how a group of teachers gradually gathered around De La Salle and in time came to form the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In doing so, we shall follow in a general way Maurice A. Hermans's book «The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in its pursuit of canonical status» (see bibliography).

Before concluding, we shall ask ourselves who these first Brothers were: a competent team of workers, a community of men inspired by the same faith, a mirror in human history of the life of the Trinity.

1. A WORD ABOUT VOCABULARY

De La Salle uses three basic terms to describe the group of Brothers he founded: community, society and institute.¹ The following definitions will help to pin down the meaning and the weight these terms carried in their day.

"Community is used when speaking of pious houses, founded in order to maintain and support a number of persons in a certain kind of regular or secular life, such as convents, abbeys, conventual prio-

ries, seminaries, hospices and all sorts of religious houses".

"Society is also a special group of persons, formed for profit or in order to live a regular life. [...] Religious form societies, congregations, in order to live a regular life in common".

"Institute. Rule which prescribes a certain kind of life. All religious orders have their special institute. [...] The Daughters of the Visitation usually call their congregation an institute".²

There were a number of precedents during the course of Church history, such as the *Brothers of the Common Life* in the 14th century: "This is a congregation without vows, of priests, clerics and lay women

who came together in search of perfection, living from the work of their hands, especially from copying manuscripts, and teaching or exercising an apostolic ministry".³

2. THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY OF BROTHERS (1679-1694)

2.1. A providential meeting

The Community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools came into existence as a result of a providential meeting between Adrien Nyel and De La Salle. Adrien Nyel had come from Rouen to set up charity schools for poor children in De La Salle's birthplace, Rheims. By 1679, the year in which the meeting took place, Nyel had already established two charity schools, one in the parish of St Maurice and the other in that of St Jacques.

Wanting to consolidate the work he had begun, Nyel consulted John Baptist de La Salle, canon, priest and soon to become Doctor of Theology. At Christmas 1679, the teachers moved into one house. During Holy Week in 1680, De La Salle lodged the seven teachers in his own house and followed a kind of retreat with them. The change that took place in them was remarkable. The teachers accepted the new lifestyle, became more pious and strengthened their commitment to their work in school. For three months, De La Salle reflected and prayed, and then went to Paris to consult Fr Barre. Fr Barre thought De La Salle was being led by Providence. "De La Salle would establish what he [Barre] had not succeeded in founding. There was only one solution: he had to live with the teachers, lead them from within the group, be one of them..." (GALLEGO 1,149).

De La Salle saw clearly that it was the voice of God speaking to him through the mouth of a saint: his faith and reason told him that Barre's advice was sound. He still had to overcome some strong personal feelings: "In fact, I suffered a great deal initially when I invited them into my house" (CL 7,169). On June 24th 1681, the feast of his patron saint and the day house leases expired, De La Salle gave the teachers permanent accommodation in his house in rue Sainte Marguerite.

2.2. "Some teachers from our Community"

It was not long before requests for teachers started coming in, first from Rethel and then from Chateau-

Porcien. In answer to the latter request, De La Salle wrote as follows on June 20th 1682: "It would be wrong of me, Gentlemen, not to send you school teachers from our community, in view of the enthusiasm and zeal you show for the Christian education and instruction of your children. So please be assured that nothing is dearer to my heart than to support your good intentions in this matter" (LA 111).

De La Salle followed Fr Barre's advice to live with the teachers and be like one of them. He left his own home and went to live with his nine teachers in a house in rue Neuve, considered now as the birthplace of the Institute. "It was a real monastery. A timetable was established, long periods were devoted to prayer and there was time for housework. [...] Life was characterised by total detachment, humility, poor habits and shoes, mortification, fasting, all the fervour of a new endeavour" (GALLEGO 1,157).

"Community exercises and work in school need a person full time" (CL 11,350 = MH 0,0,10), De La Salle would write one day. And so, as Blain says, in 1683, he gave up his canonry to devote himself more fully to the training of his teachers, give them an example of the perfection he proposed to them, and adopt himself the lifestyle he was introducing to their community. In 1685, the teachers changed the way they dressed, adopting a short cassock and a mantle without sleeves. "This unusual dress makes seculars look upon those belonging to the community as persons separated and withdrawn from the world, and it is quite proper that they should think this, for it will prevent them from frequenting people of the world too easily and conversing with them" (CL 11,352 = MH 0,0,40).

By 1685, De La Salle was firmly committed to the training of teachers, and he took steps to set up a seminary for country teachers. There were some who wished to give the seminary legal standing by obtaining *letters patentes*. He was also seen as the head of a community of teachers. Brothers were moved from house to house as the need arose⁴ — new schools, existing schools, for reasons of personal renewal.

The first biographers speak of the need for uniformity felt by the group, and begin to refer to the "small congregation". "Seeing that he was responsible for a number of teachers working in several different towns, J.-B. de La Salle considered it appropriate to form them into a small congregation, and to prescribe for them a uniform style of life" (CL 7,231).

"Seeing, therefore, that he was responsible for a number of teachers working in several different towns, he devised a new way of proceeding. He considered it appropriate to form all these members into a small congregation, and to prescribe for them a uniform style of life" (CL 6,73).

2.3. The first vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

On the feast of the Ascension, May 23rd 1686, De La Salle assembled the *principal Brothers* in Rheims. There were perhaps a dozen of them, half of the total number of Brothers. The aim was to give the group greater cohesion. The assembly discussed how the Community should be called, the choice of one confessor for all the Brothers, the habit, the regulations, the formation of new recruits to the Brothers. It decided to run schools in towns rather than in the country and to maintain complete gratuity in them. It discussed timetables also.

Another point that was discussed was the question of vows. A commitment to God expressed by means of vows would fix the Brothers in their vocation, and they would consider themselves as consecrated persons.

The Brothers accepted the idea with enthusiasm, but somewhat recklessly, and asked to make perpetual profession straightaway. De La Salle, however, preferred to proceed with more caution: he weighed up the pros and cons, the advantages and the disadvantages, taking into account both God's grace and human weakness. When Pentecost Sunday came, it was too early for a decision, and the retreat was prolonged for a further week. Finally, on June 9th, the feast of the Holy Trinity, De La Salle and the Brothers present, each in his turn, pronounced the vow of obedience for three years, to be renewed every year.

The following year, it seems as if De La Salle persuaded the Brothers to choose one of their own number as superior. But, as the biographers tell us, the "ecclesiastical authorities" refused to accept the idea of a

lay person giving orders to a priest, as De La Salle was, and Brother Henry L'Heureux was very pleased to hand over the reins of office to the person who would be known as the Founder of the Brothers. The situation seemed dangerous in the long term for the autonomy of the community. De La Salle tried many times, but for a long time in vain, to get the Brothers to choose one of themselves as superior.

Around 1690, Fr Baudrand, parish priest of St Sulpice in Paris, tried to impose the ecclesiastical habit on the Brothers who had been in his parish for two years. De La Salle defended strongly the originality of the Brothers and wrote a document in support, which we know as the *Memoir on the Habit*. Here is some of De La Salle's reasoning:

"Before introducing anything into the community, much thought needs to be given and the good and bad consequences of such an action need to be carefully examined. But once the step has been taken, one must be very careful not to reverse the decision unless it is absolutely necessary (CL 11,351 = MH 0,0,24).

"If the Brothers of this community wore the ecclesiastical habit, they would be tempted easily to study, to be tonsured, to accept successive clerical orders, and look for work in the parishes" (CL 11,354 = MH 0,0,58).

According to M. A. Hermans's calculations, the term "community" is used more than 40 times in the space of eight pages to describe the small group of Brothers. De La Salle demands that his Brothers be independent and free in their community life to follow their vocation. They are neither seculars nor ecclesiastics. As Brothers of the Christian Schools they lead, as laymen, a life close to that of religious.

2.4. A community in crisis

By the time 1690 arrived, the Seminary for country teachers was no longer recruiting and the number of postulants was going down. In three years, there had been one vocation, and many Brothers were leaving or dying prematurely. De La Salle himself fell seriously ill and Br Henry L'Heureux died. In the midst of this painful situation, De La Salle decided that the Community had "to grow from within", as S. Gallego puts it (1,236).

One consequence was that newly arrived Brothers would not begin teaching before they were properly trained. Another was that De La Salle opened in Vaugirard the first real novitiate and made it his resi-

dence. He also organised annual retreats there for the Brothers so that they could renew themselves thoroughly in a peaceful setting. And finally, the Brothers would write to him at regular intervals and he would visit them periodically. By these means, unity and the call to perfection were strengthened among the Brothers.

De La Salle was now 40 years old. Wishing to make a more positive commitment to the work entrusted to him by God, he invited Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin to make — secretly, no doubt — what later became known as the "heroic vow" of association and union to establish the "Society of the Christian Schools". This they did on November 21st 1691, the

feast of the Presentation of the Most Blessed Virgin. We know the formula they used from Blain (CL 7,313). The three committed the rest of their lives as a group to the service of the Christian Schools. Their decision was dictated by the need to maintain the "work of God" by relying solely on his Providence.

On October 31st 1692, Mgr de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, gave De La Salle verbal permission for the novitiate to become a community (CL 7,318), a step which helped to consolidate the young Society. Georges Rigault (1,202) believed that "this permission admitted the Society of the Brothers to the ranks of religious communities". In reality, it applied only to the house at Vaugirard.⁵

3. THE SOCIETY OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (1694-1705)

3.1. The first perpetual vows

On June 6th 1694, De La Salle and 12 Brothers made perpetual vows of association, stability and obedience. The *Collection* describes the obligations entailed by these vows which would be taken subsequently by many other Brothers:

"1. To run schools by association with those who have become associated with the Society and with those who will become associated with it in the future, wherever one is sent, and to do whatever one is assigned to do by the Superiors.

"2. To remain stable in the said Society [...].

"3. [...] To resolve to beg and to live on bread alone rather than abandon the said Society and the schools.

"4. To obey. First, the Superior of the Society who has been chosen [...]. Thirdly, the body of this Society..." (CL 15,2f - R 2).

De La Salle then involved the Brothers who had made these vows directly in the running of the Society: he resigned as Superior. After two secret ballots, De La Salle was re-elected. His re-instatement was accompanied, however, by a new clause: a declaration signed by the 12 Brothers confirmed the lay character of the Society.

From this point on, the term *society* is used more and more and replaces *community* to designate the Brothers in all the houses as a whole.

The copy we have of the *Practice of the daily regulation* is a manuscript dated 1713. As Br M. A. Hermans points out: "There is absolutely no doubt that the date is that of the copy and not of the composition". The chapter dealing with "the prayers to be said for deceased Brothers" (CL 25,84-87) makes no reference to the ranks of superior, visitor or director. "The only differentiation introduced into the community obligations regarding the deceased is based on whether vows were made and for how long they were made. This represents a very clear statement regarding the importance attached both to the vows, even this early on, and to the fundamental equality of rights of each of the members of the Society" (CL 11,77).

In autumn 1702, De La Salle sent two Brothers to Rome to run a Papal school and "to ask God for the grace that their Society might always be submissive" to the Church of Rome, as we read in his last will and testament (CL 10,118 = EP 4). It was a means also to bring the Society's existence to the attention of the Roman court and to prepare the way for papal approbation.⁶

3.2. An ecclesiastical superior imposed from outside

In December 1702, an event took place that shows the great attachment of the Brothers to De La Salle: the new archbishop of Paris announced his decision to put another ecclesiastic in De La Salle's place as

Superior of the Brothers. The latter protested vigorously and threatened to leave the diocese and go and live their community life with De La Salle elsewhere. After resisting for several days, they accepted the orders of the archbishop, but only after obtaining a written assurance that the authority of the new superior would be purely nominal, and that the Brothers would refer only to De La Salle regarding all matters relating to the internal government of the community.

In 1703, Mgr de Noailles confirmed De La Salle in his position as superior. "His Eminence the Cardinal announced that it was his intention that he [M. de La Salle] should continue to govern his Community as he had up till then" (Maillefer, CL 6,150).

Blain writes that, around 1703, a number of Brothers with perpetual vows left the Society. Two of them went to La Trappe. Before accepting them, the abbot asked for De La Salle's advice. De La Salle wanted the Brothers to return, and he obtained a promise from

the abbot that he would not accept any Brothers in the future without his approval.⁷

The fact that the Society of the Brothers was now a coherent and established body is illustrated by the following event mentioned by M. A. Hermans: "On February 10th of this same year of 1703, De La Salle admitted to the Society a 25 year old man with the tonsure, whose delicate health had prevented him from supporting the rigours of life at La Trappe. His name was Joseph Traffet. On entering, he took the name of Brother Barthelemy and, 14 years later, became superior general of the Society. He had left the austere abbey only on the advice of the Abbot de Rancé. [...] The way he entered the Society was no different from that of the other Brothers. [...] However, it did demonstrate that the life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools already had a sufficiently established religious value for it to be considered on a par with other forms of the regular life".⁸

4. THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (1705-1719)

4.1. The "Rules" of the Institute

We read in Blain: "Around the year 1700, he [De La Salle] composed a *Rule for the Brother Directors*, which he subsequently sent in manuscript form to all the houses of the Institute, ordering the Brother Director to have it read in the refectory during dinner, on the first Thursday of every month, and to use it himself as spiritual reading on Sundays and Thursdays" (CL 8,146). De La Salle had a very high regard for the position of Director: "The holy priest often said that the Institute was in the hands of the Brother Directors, and that what they did contributed either to its building up or destruction" (CL 8,145).

We do not have this text, but one entitled *Rule of the Brother Director of a house of the Institute*, dated 1718, has the following to say: "His whole concern should be to direct, under the guidance and authority of the Brother Superior of the Institute, all that concerns his house and the schools that depend on it, and to give interior direction to the Brothers under his care, to make them advance in virtue and to lead them to the perfection of their state and of their Institute by directing their conscience..." (CL 25,154 = FD 1,2).

The word *Institute* occurs also in the manuscript of the *Common Rules of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, dated 1705, but drawn up a few years earlier. In it, community life is understood very much in terms of the monastic tradition. As M. A. Hermans says:

"The Brother Director has many of the powers of an abbot. The Rule entrusts him with the care of souls, [...] it submits to him, as to God himself, those for whom he is literally responsible. As in most ancient texts, the vows are not mentioned in it, but three chapters of the Rule treat expressly of poverty, chastity and obedience, while others insist on that spirit of mortification and humility, prayer and faith in which, above all, union with God is to be sought, and docility to the least inspirations of his grace" (CL 11,71).

What is more, the 1705 Rule speaks clearly of the nature and purpose of the Institute, and of the quality and rights of its members: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made of maintaining schools gratuitously. The members of this Institute are called Brothers and they will never allow themselves to be called differ-

ently. They cannot be priests nor aspire to the clerical state. [...] The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this reason that schools are maintained in it" (CL 25,16).

As M. A. Hermans comments, "According to the terms of these *Common Rules*, the 1705 Brother appears as a lay person, invited to practise the counsels, entirely separated from the world, fixed in a state, vowed to his apostolic work which must be pursued in and by the *Society of the Christian Schools*. His personal obligations, his duties to God, to his superiors and his Brothers, are not much different, both by their quality and their scope, from the precepts traditionally imposed on religious who are not exclusively contemplative" (CL 11,72).

4.2. Towards recognition by the Holy See

In 1705, De La Salle informed Br Gabriel Drolin, living in Rome, that the former Archbishop of Avignon, who was now a cardinal, "would protect and help the Institute of our Brothers as much as he could" (LA 17,17). It seems, then, that De La Salle intended and hoped to count on the protection of a cardinal for the young Institute.

In 1712, the creation of the short-lived novitiate in Marseille would have been useful if the Institute were divided up into two provinces (CL 11,75). There were already two Visitors, one based in Rheims and the other in Avignon.

4.3. The risk of fragmentation in the Institute

During the long absence of the Founder from Paris (following the Clement affair in 1712), Br Barthelemy took over as Superior in all but name. He took an important decision which the majority of the Brothers did not ratify: he asked the bishop of each of the dioceses where the Brothers were to appoint an ecclesiastical superior whom they could consult regarding their spiritual and temporal affairs (Cf. CL 6,222). These superiors themselves realised that there was a danger the Institute would break up, and drew Br Barthelemy's attention to this danger. They drew up with the Brothers, especially with Br Joseph, the Visitor of most of the houses of the north of France, a plan of defence for the Institute in three points: 1. To deal with the external superiors only regarding material problems and not give them any title except that of

protector. 2. Visit all the communities. 3. Call a general assembly of the Brothers⁹ (Cf. GALLEGO 1,502).

While the Founder remained absent the worry persisted. The Brothers wondered how to resolve the situation. On Easter Sunday 1714, the principal Brothers of Paris, Versailles and St Denis wrote to De La Salle, ordering him "in the name and on behalf of the body of the society to which you have promised obedience to take up responsibility again immediately for the overall government of our Society" (CL 8,118). This small group of Brothers believed it represented the body of the Institute even though it came from a small part of it. Faithful to the vow he had made, De La Salle returned to Paris on August 10th and took up his responsibility as Superior. However, he accustomed the Brothers to refer more and more to Br Barthelemy.

It was Br Barthelemy who was sent by the Brothers assembled at St Yon to visit all the communities of the Institute in preparation for the General Chapter which would elect a Superior and undertake the revision of the Rules. At the Chapter, 16 capitulants represented 100 or so Brothers. The Founder indicated he would not preside over the assembly and that he would not even take part in it. He would remain, however, at the disposal of the Chapter to help if he was asked (Cf. GALLEGO 1,548). On Tuesday May 18th 1717, Brother Barthelemy was elected Superior General and, on May 23rd, after the closure of the Chapter, he and 15 other capitulants renewed their vows together.

As S. Gallego writes: "The Institute had defined itself clearly: all that was lacking was Rome's approval. It was a community, with its own habit, which affirmed its exclusively lay character. Perpetual vows were made in it and it had a Rule adapted to its needs. It had defined the area of its apostolate: integral education through the Christian school, and it considered complete gratuity to be essential. The Institute had its hierarchy: a Superior, two Assistants, two Visitors, a Director for each house. It had a centralised organisation not restricted to any particular diocese. [...] The Brothers wished to acquire legal status in civil and canonical law, and this would make them religious. Strictly speaking, they would become so only in 1917 when the new code of canon law appeared, but for ordinary people and doubtlessly for the Brothers themselves, the granting of the Bull of Approbation would make them religious" (1,552).

5. THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF THE COMMUNITY ACCORDING TO THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF J. B. DE LA SALLE

How did De La Salle envisage the small group of persons he had brought together? His writings, without offering any kind of systematic theory, reveal his deeply spiritual view of the community.

5.1. Rooted in faith

John Baptist de La Salle was a man of profound faith. In his spirituality, faith is central to the fundamental attitude of the Christian. As he wrote, referring to St Paul: "The just man, that is to say, the true Christian, lives by faith, because he behaves and acts through views¹⁰ and motives of faith. It is for this reason that it is very important for the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who have as the purpose of their Institute to educate the children, who are entrusted to their care in the spirit of Christianity and to ensure they acquire it, to be so penetrated and to be so abundantly filled with the spirit of faith, that they look upon the sentiments and maxims of faith as a rule to govern their actions and their whole conduct, and the spirit of faith as the spirit of their Institute" (CL 15,71 = R 11,1,1).

"The spirit of this Institute is first a spirit of faith, which should induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God" (RC 2,2).

5.2. "Work of God"

Faith made De La Salle see the establishment of his Institute as a gift from God. In what we might call his "personal programme", he writes as follows: "I shall always look upon the work of my salvation and the establishment and direction of our community as the work of God. That is why I shall abandon its care to him, and do everything that concerns me in it only by his order. I shall consult him constantly regarding what I should do concerning one or the other, and I shall often say to him the words of the prophet Habakuk, *Domine, opus tuum*" (CL 10,114 = EP 3,0,8 quoting Ha 3,2).

"It is God who, by his Providence, has established the Christian Schools" (MR 193, title). Quite an as-

tonishing thing to say when we know how much De La Salle did to consolidate this work. For all that, it was still the work of God, and because of that it was a task of fundamental importance to which he dedicated himself body and soul. In a moment of crisis, when the forces of evil threatened to destroy the young society, De La Salle made a pact with Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin, two Brothers in whom he had the utmost confidence, for the sole purpose of procuring the glory of God by the establishment of the Christian Schools for the service of poor youth. The heroic vow of association and union strengthened the community from within, by centring on its permanent establishment enthusiasm for God's plan and commitment to the accomplishment of his work for the liberation and salvation of mankind. Apostolic aims and community cohesion are a source of mutual reinforcement, for the work of God is to reveal God as Father by living as Brothers.

5.3. Founded on Providence

It can be said without any danger of exaggeration that the entire process of De La Salle's conversion to God culminates in the establishment and government of the community." He gives up his canonry, shares the life and house of the teachers, distributes his goods to the poor and accepts the risk of having to beg. He does all this because he is convinced that the glory of God demands it of him. Inspired by Nicolas Barré, he believes that the Brothers' community must be founded solely on Providence. In the *Memoir on the Habit*, he speaks of the community as being "presently established and founded solely on Providence. Its members live according to rules, in total dependence, not having any property, and in complete uniformity" (CL 11,349 = MH 0,0,2).

Given these living conditions, the community of Brothers sees that it has been established by God to accomplish his work and to contribute in this way to his plan of salvation for poor youth. Without any human, financial, political or even ecclesiastical support, it finds its strength by putting itself completely into the hands of God, for it is he who founds, calls and

sends. On the other hand, God counts on the cooperation of people. To retire from the world, the Founder tells Gabriel Drolin: "You have to have life's necessities, and you need to know where you can get them. [...] See if God shows his approval of your work and notice if Divine Providence is assisting you" (LA 20,15s). God's Providence sends children to the Brothers whose hearts are filled with love for poverty: "The angels will make you known and will inspire parents to send you their children to teach" (MD 86,3).

5.4. Led by the Spirit

When De La Salle describes how a community is built up, he speaks from experience. He shows also both realism and evangelical inspiration. He knows how hard it is for the human heart to rid itself of selfishness. It is pointless to expect miracles (MD 73,2-3); each one has to bear with his neighbour's defects (MD 74, MD 65). Living together in peace is beyond man's strength! The Brothers must never stop asking God for great union among themselves, just as Jesus asked his Father for it for his apostles before he died: "Since you are privileged to be called by God to live a community life, there is nothing you should pray for with greater insistence than union of heart and mind with your Brothers. Only by means of such harmony will you be able to maintain that peace which constitutes the whole happiness of your life. Ask therefore the Lord of all hearts to make yours one with those of your Brothers, in that of Jesus" (MD 39,3).

Union with Jesus and union with the Brothers go together, therefore. "The Brothers will have a cordial affection for one another, but they will give no sign of particular affection to anyone, through respect for Our Lord whom they should honour equally in all as being animated by him and living by his Spirit" (RC 13,1). To recognise, through faith, Jesus Christ present in one's Brother, as well as the Spirit who animates him, helps to overcome natural repugnance and antipathy. And so, they will say only good of their Broth-

ers, speaking of them always "with esteem and much respect, showing at all times the esteem and the sincere, true and interior union they have with them" (RC 13,12). In practice this is revealed by mutual help and respect, listening to others, self-forgetfulness and the forgiveness of offences, in imitation of Christ washing the feet of his disciples (EM 13,282).

And so, in communities, Brothers are animated with "the same sentiments as the first Christians, who had but one heart and one soul" (MF 113,2; Cf. MD 39,3). It is especially when the Brothers come together in the name of Christ, that Christ unites the Brothers around himself like the branches of a vine and pours out on them his Spirit (EM 2,34 & 36). *The Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* speaks with emotion of Jesus Christ present in the midst of the Brothers gathered for prayer (EM 2,25-32).

"Give me also the grace through your presence in our midst, assembled in order to pray to you, to have an intimate union of mind and heart with my Brothers [...] in order that having received your divine Spirit according to the fulness which you have destined for me, I may allow myself to be guided by him in order to fulfil the duties of my state, and that he may make me participate in your zeal for the instruction of those whom you will wish to entrust to my care" (EM 2,37,3-4).

In the same way, the teachers brought together by De La Salle accepted one another as Brothers and as elder brothers of the youngsters entrusted to their care (CL 7,241). Fraternal life is not primarily asceticism: it is mysticism and apostolate. De La Salle introduced his Brothers to the ineffable reality of the intimate life of God, so that they could share in it and make their pupils share in it too, because they also are consecrated to the Trinity by their baptism (MD 64,3). It is God's Spirit who unites the Brothers with Christ and, at the same time, among themselves, making them faithful to their vocation to serve young people entrusted to them by the Father.

6. CONCLUSION: A COMMUNITY IN THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

Man is "the most perfect of all the creatures on earth [...] a creature with reason formed in the image of God" (DB 1,7,1), according to the extraordinary words of the Bible. He is in the image of God "because of his soul", says De La Salle, "capable of knowing and loving God" and his brothers (DB 1,7,2). The union which Jesus asks his Father for his apostles must be "so close and so firm as to resemble that which exists between the three Divine Persons, producing the same effect as the essential union between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (MF 39,3; Cf. Jn 17,21f).

With the Apostle Paul, he recommends the Brothers to be united in their convictions and in their love, "with a common purpose and a common mind" (Ph 2,2). One sometimes gets the impression that De La Salle makes uniformity a necessary virtue. However, it is clear we should not see this as a leveling down of individuals as the word *uniformity* implies nowadays: to realise this we have only to read the letters De La Salle wrote to his Brothers or the meditation on the Good Shepherd (MD 33) which reveal his astonishing ability to adapt to individual differences. What is really meant is unity, for what the Founder proposes to his Brothers is nothing less than the imitation of the mystery of the love of the Trinity, which consists of unity, total gift of self, respect for each person, the joyous acceptance of others seen as a gift. Obedience, zeal, regularity, just like fraternal love, have there their fundamental *raison d'être*.

It was in the name and, perhaps one could say, on the model of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and

Holy Spirit that De La Salle formed the Brothers with whom God had united him (Cf. *Testament* = EP 4), into the *Society of the Christian Schools* (EP 1, EP 2). With St Augustine, he thinks that what the ignorant children who come to the Brothers are essentially asking for is "the knowledge of the three Divine Persons" (MD 37,2).

Although the thinking of the Founder is strongly trinitarian,¹² he does not speak of the explicit relationship between the Church and the Trinity, a patristic theme extensively developed by Vatican II. The modern reader should be aware that, when the Founder speaks of God, he does not speak of some abstract entity, but of the God of the Covenant who reveals himself in Jesus Christ, his Son: "The only thing a Christian should apply himself to in this life is to know God in himself and all that he has done, and the Son of God made man and what he did for our salvation" (CL 20,2 = DA 101).

Likewise, De La Salle does not speak of the Church as an image of the Trinity. The period in which he lived was marked by the controversy with the Protestants, and the Church as a visible society was the aspect most insisted upon. However, familiarity with the Scriptures enabled the Founder to find an equivalent in St Paul: "Often pray to St Michael that he may be pleased to protect this small family, or, as St Paul says, this Church of Christ, our community, and preserve in it the spirit of Jesus Christ. May he obtain for each of its members the graces necessary to continue in their vocation, and to inculcate the Christian spirit in those under their care" (MF 169,3).

7. NOTE: THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN THE 1987 RULE

When the *Rule* of the Brothers was re-written in 1987 in response to the request of Vatican II to all religious congregations, the Institute concentrated its attention on a number of topics, especially some relating to community, which reflected progress in the human sciences, and which had been raised during the Council. Among these topics we can mention the following: the dignity of the human person, with his rights and duties (art. 53); the role of the Brother Director to promote the spiritual growth of the Brothers

(art. 61), and the unity of the community (art. 54b), in line with FD 1,2. Newer topics include concern for their affective life (art. 30 & 56), leisure activities (art. 54c), and the stress on being welcoming (art. 57, 57a & 64).

The *Rule* speaks of community poverty (art. 33) and community attention to the causes of poverty (art. 14); of doing apostolic work as a member of a community (art. 16), and of the place of the Brothers' community in the educational community (art. 17a). The

role of the community in the mission shared with lay people is hardly touched upon (art. 17c, 20, 51a & 146). The *Rule* includes also more traditional topics: the influence of fraternal love (art. 9 & 53), community spirit (art. 17c & 23), the importance of prayer in community (art. 71-73), the sharing of faith (art. 48). Referring to the trinitarian inspiration of community (*id.*), it stresses the need to integrate consecration, min-

istry and community life (art. 10). Community witness depends on this (art. 49a), as does the pastoral ministry of vocations (art. 85). The aims and methods of the apostolate need to be revised periodically (art. 51). The topic of pluralism and the need for dialogue is raised (art. 58), leading to the question of how to discern in community (art. 37), since not everything can be decided on a *priori* basis.

¹ The order in which these three words are given reflects the frequency of their use in successive historical periods, as attested by historically reliable dated documents (Cf. Circ. 410, 47 and CL 11,51).

² *Dictionnaire Universel Français et Latin* (known as the *Trévoux* dictionary), 1721, vol. II, p.38; vol. IV, p. 1769; vol. III, p. 1022.

³ *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. II, p. 1160, article by Marcel Viller on *Communauté (vie de)*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1953.

⁴ What we now call a local community, the Brothers used to call a house.

⁵ See CL 11,55

⁶ CL 11,67

⁷ CL 11,69

⁸ CL 11,70

⁹ CL 8,116

¹⁰ By error, the text printed in 1711 had *revues* (reviews) instead of *vues* (views).

¹¹ His zeal (see this term in the present volume) was not restricted to this limited field: he was involved also in the conversion of big sinners, the accompaniment of priests, spiritual direction...

¹² See AEP, especially the 3rd part.

Complementary themes

Abandonment	Consecration	Love - charity
Association	Director	Ministry
Brothers of the Christian Schools	Formation	Religious
Christian teacher	God's work	Virtues of a teacher
	Imitation of Christ	Zeal

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70. CONDUCT

Summary

1. Four meanings of "conduite".
2. "Conduct" as a linear process.
3. "Conduct" as a ternary process.
4. The "Conduct of Schools" and the "Discourse on the Method".
5. God "conducts" us along the road to salvation.

1. THE FOUR MEANINGS OF "CONDUITE"

The noun *conduite* denotes the manner in which something is done, carried out or accomplished. The verb *conduire* describes the action producing the above effects. In the Lasallian corpus, *conduite* also denotes behavior, especially of children, and personal comportment, especially of Brothers. The verb *se conduire* means to behave oneself.

Three quotations are enough to illustrate the different ways *conduite* is used:

- "God's ordinary way of dealing (*conduite*) with a soul" (MD 18,1 & 23,3).
- "Those who are responsible for the conduct (*conduite*) of others" (CL 20,152 - DA 212,0,4).
- "Show by your exterior behaviour (*conduite*) that you are happy" (MF 82,2).

These simple examples are enough to show that this word has a number of distinct meanings. The problem regarding its use in the Lasallian corpus is to decide which meaning to give to it. The meaning most often intended by De La Salle is implied. This is the meaning this article will examine, showing that it implies a certain understanding of the vocation of the Brother.

In French, especially in 17th century spiritual writings, the word *conduite* has the connotation of spir-

itual or moral guidance given by some person. And so, we read of Brother Directors who have the responsibility in the Institute "to give interior guidance to the Brothers who are under their charge" (*conduite*) (CL 25,154 = FD 1). And so, De La Salle often uses *conduite* to describe the spiritual or legal responsibility exercised by one person regarding another. For example, he sees persons in charge leading and directing other persons and being responsible for them: "St Joseph, having been commissioned by God to take care of Jesus Christ" (MF 110,1; Cf. CL 20,26 = DA 104,1,6).

The use of the noun *conduite* and the verb *conduire* in Lasallian writings reveals four levels of personal relationship:

- God leads the Brother interiorly.
- The superior directs the Brother or is in charge of him.
- The Brother gives an account of his conduct to his superior and to God.
- The Brother is responsible for his pupils and their conduct.

For De La Salle, this whole concept is vital: "I adore in all things the conduct of God in my regard" (CL 8,174).

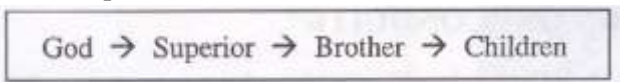
2. "CONDUCT" AS A LINEAR PROCESS

It is not surprising that the Brother is the common element in the four levels indicated above: he is, after all, at the centre of the Founder's writings. What is interesting, is that both God and the superior seem to have the same status vis a vis the Brother. When the

superior directs, it is God who directs, in virtue of what the Gospel says: "Anyone who listens to you listens to me" (Lk 10,16). De La Salle applies these words to "all those who are under the direction of a superior" (MD 21,1), to "superiors" among the Broth-

ers (MF 91,1; CL 15,88 = R 11,2,29), and to "our Directors" (CL 15,51 = R 9,2,6).

What is most important, however, is that the Brother has a special role as intermediary. He is in practical terms the channel of grace from God to the children. One of the most precious aspects of "ministry", is that the action of the "minister" is characterised by the active presence of the one who "put him in charge of guiding these children" (MR 203,3). The action of grace can be illustrated in a linear fashion by the following diagram which shows how it is passed on:



When De La Salle speaks in MR 200,1 and MR 205,2 of "the souls of the children God has entrusted to your care" (*soiri*), and in MF 189,3 of "the salva-

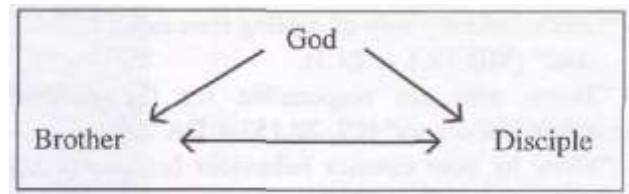
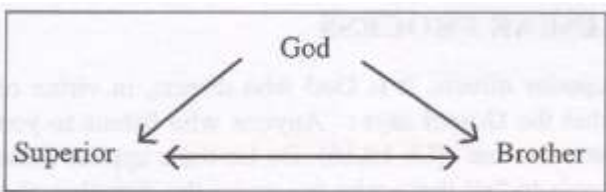
tion of those souls which are confided to your care" (*conduite*), he makes no distinction between *soin* and *conduite*.

Just as the children are in the care (*conduite*) of the Brother, the Brother himself is under the direction of God who speaks to him through his superior. In MD 21,1, the Founder refers to "those who are under the direction (*conduit*) of a superior", and in LA 33,7, he recommends to Brother Hubert: "In mental prayer, often give yourself up to God's guidance" (*conduite*). The appeal made to the Brother's will is interior: the superior must not act as a screen. In both of the above quotations, De La Salle uses *conduite* in the sense of will and direction. It is clear from the Founder's writings as a whole, that God directs the Brother through the voice of the superior, and that the Brother, in his turn, directs the pupils. This dual movement is best expressed by one or other form of the verb *conduire*.

3. "CONDUCT" AS A TERNARY PROCESS

The linear diagram above does not do justice to this mystery, because it does not show the transcendental characteristic of the relationship expressed by the first arrow, that is, the creative and redeeming presence of God to each of his creatures, distinct from any human intermediaries: "God is in all things and all things are nothing unless God is present in them" (CL 14,13 = EM 2,42). The superior is not always an intermediary in this relationship: "In mental prayer, often give yourself up to God's guidance" (LA 33,7). This shows that God's action is not bound by any process of transmission by intermediaries.

Children, just like the Brothers, are consecrated to the Trinity by their baptism (MD 46,3) and the Brothers' work consists in strengthening their Christian vocation. It is God whom entrusts the children to them. Jesus is the "good and sole Master" of their disciples (MF 102,2). Two other diagrams complement the first:



The value of setting things out in this way is that it shows that neither the superior, who takes the place of God (MF 91,1), nor the Brother, who takes the place of Jesus Christ (MR 195,3), should try to attract the inferior or the disciple to himself.

If the *Advice to Brothers in charge* reflects the Founder's thinking (cf. the article *Director*, § 4.2.2., in the present volume), then it illustrates well the above attitude: The superior must lay aside his own thoughts and give himself up to God's Spirit so as to act only under his direction (1,2) and "regulate his conduct according to the thinking of all his inferiors [...] in order to lead them to God" (48).

Likewise, the inferior is led by God, and the task of the superior is to facilitate this. As De La Salle says: "As the interior light of God is not sufficient to guide you safely to him [...], God has given you superiors whose duty it is to take his place in your regard,

and to guide you in the path to heaven as God himself does interiorly within you" (MF 91,1).

Meditation 33 speaks to those who have care of souls: "This varied conduct must depend on knowledge and discernment of spirits, and this grace you must beg of God [...] as being the most essential for you in the direction of those over whom you have charge" (MD 33,1). What it says is as important for superiors as for the Brothers in relation to their pupils.

The same thing is said very clearly in the medita-

tion for the 3rd Sunday in Advent: "It is the same with those who instruct others. They are but the voice that disposes hearts [...], but the one who really disposes them [...] is none other than God himself. [...] The voice is a sound that strikes the ear and conveys a message" (word) (MD 3,1). The parallel drawn between voice and word, is taken from St Augustine, and defines the real role of the Brother: "Let us humble ourselves, since we are nothing more than a voice and since, of ourselves, we are incapable of doing any good to souls" (*Id.*).

4. THE "CONDUCT OF SCHOOLS" AND THE "DISCOURSE ON THE METHOD"

Any attempt to go into the connotations of the word *conduite* in the days of De La Salle would be incomplete without a reference to the metaphor proposed by Descartes. The full title of the work by Descartes, commonly known as the *Discourse on the Method* (1637), is as follows: "Discourse on the method of using [= conduct] one's reason and seeking truth in knowledge [= sciences]". Any person who was educated in 17th century France read Descartes. His work presented a psychological cosmology whose only rival was the astrological cosmology of Copernicus, written 150 years earlier.

Descartes uses the word *conduire* in his metaphor of a mental map, which will teach him how to direct his reason along the true and straight road in the search for truth. From the very first paragraph of the *Discourse*, *conduire* is accompanied by terms referring to travel, such as "way" and "path". In his interior journey in search of truth, the true road is the straight road, and any deviation from it would lead to ambiguity and error.

It is important to recall that, for Descartes, divergence and diversity are synonymous. All men are born with the same common sense, Descartes tells us, but the diversity of opinions does not come from the fact that some people are more intelligent or more reasoning than others, but from the fact that "we conduct our thoughts along different paths and do not consider the same things".

This cartesian understanding of the word *conduite* is clearly reflected in De La Salle's *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. It is enough to open this work on any page to be struck by the way in which masses of details are reduced to a homogeneous whole.

Instead of distracting the attention of the Brother in class, these details serve rather to help him to be always in synchrony with the other Brothers, to follow the same path as the other Brothers and classes, so that, should the occasion arise, another Brother can take over his class with the minimum of risk. This explains the insistence on uniformity in teaching methods (RC7,3; CL24,115 = CE 11; CL 15,38 = R8,2,20; CL 25,161 = FD 1,27).

All disciplinary measures, all registers and all practical procedures have to be observed in a uniform manner so as to ensure that everything is conducted in an ordered and, consequently, correct way. In fact, the whole concept of homogeneity which presupposes simultaneous teaching is symptomatic of the climate of the times: order, harmony, symmetry, control, centralisation, absolute monarchy.

The ternary diagrams show how "theocratic" temptations can be overcome. To become a teacher the Brother must first of all become and remain a disciple: "Unless they themselves walk in the right path, those who follow them would be led astray. [...] If you wish your disciples to practise virtue, do so yourself (MD 33,2).

5. GOD "CONDUCTS" US ALONG THE ROAD TO SALVATION

In De La Salle's writings, the word *conduite* cannot be separated from the metaphor of the mental map. Its lexical satellites include such words as "road", "path" and "way". In their turn, these travel terms are almost always followed by words indicating a destination, so that we are always meeting such phrases as "the way of salvation or the road to heaven".

In the *Duties of a Christian towards God*, for example, De La Salle speaks of "the path that leads us to heaven" (CL 20,413 = DA 401,2,5) and of "the hand of God [which] leads us to the path to salvation" (CL 20,322 = DA 207,5,16). It seems as if the Founder had at his disposal a ready-made and fixed formula:

Conduct + road-path-way → heaven-salvation-God

If we superimpose this linear formula on the first linear diagram spoken of earlier, we see that the element in common, that is, *conduite*, serves in De La Salle's mind to provide a link between

- persons: God, Superior, Brother, Disciple
- means : road, path, way
- aims : heaven, salvation, God.

The very title of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* reminds us that, as a handbook indicating the procedures to follow in order to direct (*conduire*) a school, it has to be considered as being one of the means to be used.

The Brothers, for whom it was intended, saw that, if they followed the means provided, God would at the same time lead (*conduire*) them along the path of their own salvation, and use them "to conduct and direct [the pupils] along the way of their salvation" (CL 15,71 =R 11,1,1).

Complementary themes

Child-Pupil-Disciple
Christian Teacher

Conduct of the Christian Schools
Director

God's Work
Ministry

Br Leonard MARSH and Br Alain HOURY

71. CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Summary

1. Scope of the theme

1.1. Meaning of the word "conduct" 1.2. Use of the word by De La Salle 1.3. The "Conduct of the Christian Schools" 1.4. Major characteristics.

2. Text and context

2.1. Education in the 17th century 2.2. Contemporary context 2.2.1. Analysis of the text itself 2.2.2. Light thrown on the CE by other Lasallian writings 2.2.3. The historical context.

3. Vocational training

3.1. The needs of the pupils 3.2. The curriculum in the CE S.S. Characteristics of the curriculum 3.3.1. Useful and practical 3.3.2. Vocational 3.3.3. Of high quality 3.3.4. Solid and lasting 3.3.5. Checked and assessed 3.3.6. Suited to the individual.

4. The human education of the pupils

4.1. The spirit of the time 4.2. The needs of the pupils 4.3. The human education of the pupils 4.3.1. Self-control 4.3.2. Interiority 4.3.3. Politeness.

5. The social training of the pupils

5.1. A violent social context 5.2. The violence of the pupils 5.3. Educational measures in the CE 5.3.1. Preventive measures: establishing a calm atmosphere 5.3.2. Repressive measures to set an example 5.3.3. Constructive measures: establishing peaceful relations.

6. Forming true Christians

6.1. In a context of religious ignorance 6.2. The aims of De La Salle 6.3. What the CE proposes 6.3.1. A religious environment 6.3.2. Religious teaching 6.3.3. Times for prayer and liturgy 6.3.4. Christian behaviour 6.3.5. Motives based on faith 6.3.6. School activities with a predominantly religious slant.

7. The teachers, the secret behind the success

7.1. The teacher's profile 7.2. Well-trained teachers 7.3. Teachers committed to an educational approach 7.4. Teachers working together.

8. Conclusion: A model that bore fruit

8.1. Initial success 8.2. The model is taken up by others 8.3. An inspiration for today?

1. THE SCOPE OF THE THEME

1.1. Meaning of the word "conduct"

Like many French words, *conduite* (conduct) has a number of meanings. According to the context in which it is used, it can mean the behaviour of a person, and then there are moral, social or religious connotations; or it can mean directing or accompanying a

person, a group, a scheme or an institution. These are the two meanings given by 17th and 18th century French dictionaries. They stress, in particular, 'direction' accompaniment and ordering. Here are some examples: "To entrust the conduct Of one's children to a trustworthy person. To direct a

child during its youth" (P. Richelet's dictionary). "One says: the conduct of a State, of a family, of a young man" (A. Furetière's dictionary). "The act of leading, conducting, guiding a person. It is said also of the way of behaving oneself and of the way each one controls himself" (*Grand Vocabulaire français*). "Ordering, directing, the action of a person who conducts" (Trévoux dictionary).

1.2. Use of the word by De La Salle

The *Lasallian Vocabulary* includes the use of "conduct" as a noun 378 times, as a verb 186 times, and in the expression "to be led" 6 times. To these we should add the verb "to conduct oneself" used 99 times. In all, therefore, the verb or noun is used 669 times, and readers of Lasallian writings should have no difficulty in working out which of the two meanings mentioned above is intended in any particular case.

In the article on *Conduct* in the present work, L. Marsh and A. Houry have summarised the Founder's thinking very clearly on this point. They describe it in terms of a dynamic relationship between God and the pupil through the intermediary of the Superior (or Director) and the Brother (or teacher).

The ministerial nature of the Brothers' Institute explains the relatively frequent use of these terms in its Founder's writings. There is no need to return to this matter.

1.3. The "Conduct of the Christian Schools"

The word takes on an even more precise meaning in the expression "conduct of the Christian Schools", which is the title given to a work published for the first time in 1720, but of which we possess a manuscript copy going back to 1706. *Cahiers Lasalliens* 24 published both texts in parallel form, which makes a comparative reading much easier.

Outside of the title, the complete expression "conduct of the Christian Schools" is found only once and that in the preface of the same work. On the other hand, the expression "conduct of schools" occurs four times, once in the body of the work and three times in another Lasallian work, the *Common Rules*,

In other texts where the expression "conduct of schools" is used, the reference is not to the work, but to the way Directors, inspectors and teachers fulfil their task of running schools and looking after pupils.

1.4. Major characteristics

For the sake of convenience, we shall use the initials CE (*Conduite des écoles*) from now on to refer to this work. Its contents have been analysed already in other articles published in the *Lasallian Themes*.

For example:

- **Persons involved in the Christian Schools** in articles entitled Director, Christian teacher, Apostle, Exercises, Ministry, Employment, Reward of the teacher, Vigilance, Virtues of a Teacher, Zeal, Child-Pupil-Disciple, Artisans, Poor, Disciples, Gratuity, Parents of the pupils.

- **The educational establishment as a whole** in articles entitled God's work, School, Association, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Formation.

- **Material taught** in articles entitled Silence, Instruction, Education, Formation, Decorum and Christian civility.

- **Relationships in school** in articles entitled Companies, Pupil-teacher relations, Heart, Correction, Gentleness, Example-edification.

- **The Christian formation of children** in articles entitled Christian, Devotion, Disciples, Guardian angels, Reflection, Spirit of Christianity, Prayer, Hymns, Catechism, Duties of a Christian.

42 articles in all, to which we could add others dealing primarily with the Brother as a religious, but which refer also to his ministry, as one might expect, since the Founder wanted no distinction to be made between the life of his Brothers and teachers and their work.

Our intention in this article is not to analyse the contents of the work called *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, topic by topic, but to touch on some of its major characteristics, and in this way try to show where and how this work is intended to "lead" pupils.

2. TEXT AND CONTEXT

Just like any other educational work, the CE did not simply appear out of the blue. It was the result of a long process of educational and scholastic evolution, and the expression of the educational needs of a given period. Although it responded to the educational needs of the children of the working class in its own particular way, it was not the first work to do so and, in many instances, it was based on previous work in this field. Before looking at its contents it would be useful to place it in its historical setting.

2.1 Education in the 17th century

In the France of the 17th century the educational world was in a state of effervescence. In brief:

- On the one hand, higher and secondary education had already reached a high level of organisation. The major universities had updated their regulations and these served as a model for new and minor universities.
- On the other hand, ever since the end of the 16th century, secondary education in colleges had had an excellent charter drawn up by the Jesuits, the *Ratio Studiorum*.

Many non-Jesuit colleges had adopted it in part, and the teaching they offered satisfied their clientele.

- However, primary or popular education, as found in the "Little Schools" and the "Charity Schools", was not yet properly organised. Each new founder or foundress of a teaching institution or congregation had to produce regulations, formulate educational principles and methods of teaching. And so, between the first edition of St Pierre Fourier's *Règles* in 1617 and the appearance of the CE a century later, a considerable number of publications appeared reflecting the great interest in this field. De La Salle knew these publications and took his inspiration from them.

This has already been studied, either in a general way by historians of primary education in France (see bibliography), or in a way more directly connected with the CE by three authors: Georges RIGAUT in his *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères...* (vol. I, pp. 1-131 and 540-598); Br Yves POUTET in his thesis *Le 17^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes* (vol. I, Part 2) and in *The origins and characteristics of Lasallian Pedagogy* (Manila, 1997); Br Saturnino GALLEGÓ, more succinctly, in *Vida y pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle* (vol. I, ch. 5 & 6).

It would be difficult to determine the full extent of what the author of the CE borrowed from his various

predecessors as this may have included both broad outlines and detailed material. The following works deserve special mention, however:

- *Les vraies constitutions des religieuses de la congrégation de Notre Dame*, Part 3 : On the instruction of lay women, by St Pierre Fourier;
- *Remonstrances, Avis important, Règlements pour les écoles de la ville et diocèse de Lyon*, by Charles Demia, written between 1666 and 1688;
- *Statuts et Règlements*, by Nicolas Barré, 1685;
- *L'Instruction méthodique pour l'école paroissiale*, by Jacques de Batencour, published in 1654 and 1685.

2.2. Internal logic of the work

Another way of studying the CE is to examine it as it stands and as it first appeared. This can be done on three different levels.

2.2.1. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT ITSELF

One can attempt to analyse the contents with the help of present-day pedagogical knowledge and terminology. This has been done, in particular by historians of education in France. This approach makes it possible to indicate the various courses offered to pupils, the organisation of work and of class groups, the kinds of relationships in class and in the school, the means of establishing and maintaining order and discipline, the various checks and especially the assessment of learning, the behaviour expected of teachers and pupils.

The interest of this kind of study should not be minimised, but it is important to indicate its limitations, and to point out the inherent risks, especially that of giving interpretations that are incomplete, or even partly erroneous, because we are dealing here with educational practices belonging to a society which has long since evolved.

Such an approach does not make it possible to appreciate the full value of the work, and especially the spirit that inspires it. Moreover, the physical aspect of the work is such that it is likely to provoke lack of interest and even rejection. The inherent problems and style of the text make it a work of the early 18th century and not of our times.

2.2.2. LIGHT THROWN ON THE CE BY OTHER LASALLIAN WRITINGS

The CE is a work which contains the theoretical basis of an undertaking and a mass of empirical observations and concrete practices, but which does not set out to explain completely and in detail the aims and spirit of the kind of school wanted by De La Salle. We know that his approach was not normally one of deduction from existing theories: his theories arose out of experience. This was true regarding the progressive organisation of the Institute, the drawing up of the *Rules* and the writing of the CE. The contents of the work begin to make more sense if they are analysed in the light of the *Common Rules*, the *Meditations*, the *Rules of propriety and Christian politeness*, and even of the *Duties of a Christian*. Many passages in the *Letters* cast light on the work also because of their concrete references.

It is through these writings, in a scattered and unsystematic way, that De La Salle indicates what the educational aim of his schools is on both the secular and the Christian plane; he explains what behaviour is expected of teachers and pupils and in what kind of spirit the educational process should take place.

2.2.3. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The CE was written at a time when two powerful movements — the acculturation and evangelisation of the ordinary people — were at work in 17th France. These two movements continued to develop during the course of the century, side-by-side with the increasing royal control of the country and within the context of a reform of the Church inspired by the Council of Trent.

After pursuing a wait-and-see-policy for several decades, the Church in France changed its attitude completely towards this Council, and this change was accompanied by an evolution in society, morals, culture and the practice of religion. This evolution was brought about to a considerable extent by schools.

If we consider the Church and society in 17th century France, we can identify a number of educational needs resulting from the following facts:

- **The precarious economic situation** of an enormous proportion of the population, due to certain events and circumstances such as bad weather, epidemics, wars, social differences, etc., as well as to widespread ignorance — 80% illiteracy rate in 1680 — and a lack of professional qualifications, which condemned the poorer social classes to live from hand to mouth.

At the same time there was clearly economic and professional progress with the expansion of manufacturing, commerce and administration, which brought in its wake an increased need for workers in tertiary employment, in the so-called service industries.

- **The lack of basic education** for the common people was reflected in everyday behaviour by social relations, characterised by roughness, violence and lack of social graces. It was against this background of violence that efforts were made to promote propriety, politeness and decent behaviour. Education too made its contribution by its "civilisation of manners".

- **Religious ignorance**, whose evil consequences had been severely condemned by the Council of Trent, affected the majority of baptised Christians — a paradox in a Christian society! We are not talking here of the religious feuds which so characterised those times — protestantism, Jansenism, quietism, gallicanism — but of innumerable and generalised forms of popular misbelief, often accompanied by superstitions. This is a point stressed by all historians: popular schools as well as colleges and universities saw their task in terms of the christianisation and moral renewal of young people, and through them, of society as a whole.

It is in the light of this widespread and complex situation, translated into terms of scholastic and educational needs, that the contents of the CE are best understood. We need to read this work, therefore, on these three levels simultaneously.

3. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

3.1. The needs of the pupils

The children of artisans or of workers with no fixed employment needed training and a qualification which

would enable them to have a real chance of getting a job to earn their livelihood and move up the social ladder.

We know that the craft confraternities, later called corporations, trained their own apprentices. There was no question, therefore, of the "little schools" and of those of De La Salle offering their pupils specific training in manual or technical skills.

This was not the case regarding "tertiary" employment. Public administration, manufacturing establishments and businesses needed an increasing number of accountants, writers, copiers, clerks — their work generally known as "the writing profession".

Schools could train pupils for these jobs so long as they could master the necessary skills. In many of the "little schools" this was not possible as they restricted their teaching to reading and catechism. On the other hand, Lasallian schools made it their business, among other things, to teach their pupils these skills.

3.2. The curriculum in the CE

The kind of school established by the Brothers with the guidance of De La Salle had a vocational purpose. This purpose is clearly expressed in various Meditations and especially clearly in chapter VII of the Rules: "They will teach pupils to read: 1. French, 2. Latin, 3. handwritten letters. They will teach them also spelling and arithmetic, doing everything in the way prescribed [...] in the first part of the *Conduct of Schools*" (RC 7,4f).

From a careful reading of the first part of the CE it is possible to draw up a list of the courses offered to the pupils, and see how they were organised and distributed in the daily timetable. Each week, 20 hours were allocated to learning reading, writing and arithmetic. It is a little surprising that the article quoted above from the *Rules* makes no mention of writing, whereas the CE gives a detailed description of the course.

The vocational purpose of the school is mentioned also elsewhere in the *Rules*, in the chapter "On Absences", in which the Brothers are recommended to be insistent with parents who are hesitant about sending their children to school: "The way to remedy the negligence of parents, especially of poor parents, is first of all to speak to them and explain to them about the obligation they are under to have their children instructed; telling them about the harm they do them by not having them taught reading and writing; showing them how much this can harm them, because they will never be capable of doing any work, not knowing how to read and write" (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,18).

And there is also the famous passage: "When parents withdraw their children from school at too early an age, when they are still not sufficiently instructed, and make them work, they must be told that they will do them great harm. For the sake of making them earn a mere pittance, they will make them lose a far greater advantage. They must be shown clearly how important it is for an artisan to know how to read and write well for, however little intelligence he may have, if he knows how to read and write, HE IS CAPABLE OF EVERYTHING" (CL 24,187 = CE 16,2,22; my emphasis).

The expression "he is capable of everything" may seem excessively optimistic unless one is aware of the socio-professional situation at the beginning of the 18th century, and of the lack of qualified people to take up the posts that were becoming available.

The detailed description of these courses occupies the first chapters of the CE, which deal in turn with "lessons in general", reading, "writing", "arithmetic" and "spelling".

3.3. Characteristics of the curriculum

What is important at this point is not to dwell on a description of methodology, but to consider the thinking behind the training given. This has much in common with the present-day "instrumental learning" approach, and has the following characteristics:

3,3.1. USEFUL AND PRACTICAL

It is easy to imagine what the daily tasks of these pupils will be once they are employed. Their work will be simple, but precise: reading, writing, calculating in connection with administrative, juridical or accounting documents, most of them handwritten, according to the techniques of the day, and often difficult to read because of the numerous abbreviations.

It was useful, therefore, to go so far as to teach pupils to decipher manuscripts. This was the aim of Lesson 9 "Of handwritten letters" and, in particular, of article x: "Of registers" (CL 40,42 = CE 3,10). This lesson advises teachers to be prudent and stresses the importance of progression in the learning process. The detailed nature of this course is highlighted by the fact, indicated in the 1706 manuscript, that it is divided into "six orders", whereas only two or three were allocated to learning to read. The expression "six orders" does not only indicate six progressive stages, each stage lasting normally a month, but it highlights

also the exceptionally long time required to become competent in dealing with "Registers". Further information regarding the meaning of the term "register" can be found in the chapter in the CE dealing with spelling (CL 24,73 = CE 6).

3.3.2. VOCATIONAL

By this we mean that the immediate aim of the courses given was utilitarian and not cultural, and was not intended to provide a body of theoretical knowledge. It is clear that a school and teaching of this type had their limitations, but they did provide a rapid way of mastering reading, writing and arithmetic. Such skills would enable pupils to do the work for which they had trained with greater concentration and speed and almost instinctively.

At a time when would-be teachers were judged on their ability to read, write and count (the last two skills were often very weak), it was ambitious on the part of the schools to wish to make all pupils acquire mastery in all three skills.

3.3.3. OF HIGH QUALITY

The CE explains in its early chapters how to strive for and achieve precision and perfection in the mastery of reading, writing and arithmetic. On the basis of examples, the pupils are required to repeat exercises over and over again till their work is perfect. This process ensures that what they learn is properly assimilated and will not be forgotten (CL 24,26 = CE 3,2,12). The CE shows much insight, in particular when it speaks of the means of teaching reading (CL 24,25f = CE 3,2,16f) and correcting handwriting (CL 24,60f = CE 4,10f).

"It should be noted that it is very important not to let a pupil stop learning the alphabet before he knows it perfectly. Otherwise, he will never learn to read properly, and this will cause a lot of trouble for the teachers who will have to teach him subsequently" (CL 24,26,6 = CE 3,2,13).

3.3.4. SOLID AND LASTING

Today, as in the 18th century, we realise that this type of teaching imposes the need for a great deal of repetition if the material is to be learnt thoroughly. This is sometimes referred to as "over-learning". The CE normally uses the word *repetition*.

For example: "When a pupil has difficulty in remembering a letter, he must be made to repeat it over and over again, and he must not move onto another line until he knows this letter as well as all the others perfectly well [...] When a pupil has learnt all the letters of the alphabet, and before he is moved on to the second card, he will spend several days studying the alphabet as a whole. He will be made to read the letters in no particular order so that it can be seen whether he knows all the letters and knows them very perfectly" (CL 24,26,4f = CE 3,2,12f).

There is a great deal of pedagogical wisdom in the following: "It is much better to be first or among the first of a lower grade than to be among the last of a higher one" (CL 24,23,10 = CE 3,1,31).

One of the consequences of wanting material to be known thoroughly is that it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to assess the assiduity of the pupils: "However, before sending pupils away for one reason or another, the inspector will speak a number of times with the parents to explain to them how important it is for their children to attend school assiduously, because, unless they do so, it is almost impossible for them to learn anything, since they forget in one day what it has taken several to learn" (CL 24,190f = CE 16,2,35).

3.3.5. CHECKED AND ASSESSED

In its description of how lessons should develop, the CE suggests various pedagogical means to stimulate or maintain the interest of the pupils during lessons taught according to the simultaneous method. For example, the pupils are questioned frequently to prevent their attention wandering, and there is much repetition. All this is intended to ensure the progress of the pupils. Progress and levels of attainment are checked thoroughly. This is done by means of monthly evaluations which decide whether a pupil changes "order" (course level) or starts the same "order" again (CL 24,21f = CE 3,1). There were in fact two assessments: that of the teacher, who checked the progress of his pupils, and that of the inspector of schools whose responsibility it was to change "lessons".

It was a double safety-check for the pupil himself and the parents. As the CE said, it was important for parents to see that their children were not wasting their time in school, and that the teaching was effec-

tive. In this connection, it is worth reading the following extracts from the CE which explain why children sometimes miss school through the fault of their parents:

"The second reason for pupils missing school lies with their parents. Either they neglect to send them to school, not taking the trouble to make sure they do so, and do so regularly C this attitude is fairly typical among poor people; or the idea of sending them to school leaves them indifferent and cold, since they are convinced that their children learn nothing or very little there; or because they make them work" (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,17).

"If it happens that parents complain that their children are learning nothing or very little, and say they want to take their children away because of this, the following measures should be taken to avoid this undesirable outcome: 1. No teacher unable to teach writing should be put into a class where pupils learn writing; 2. Steps should be taken not to put or leave in any school teachers who are incapable of fulfilling their duties properly or teaching well the children entrusted to their care" (CL 24,188 = CE 16,2,22).

3.3.6. SUITED TO THE INDIVIDUAL

It should not be forgotten that De La Salle and the Brothers were among those who organised simultaneous teaching at a time when individual teaching and private tutoring were still predominant. They had to be pioneers, in fact. The following outline will give an idea of how they organised things:

- When children are admitted to school, their abilities should be evaluated so that they can be put into the group best suited to their capacity. This process is described at the beginning of the third part of the 1706 manuscript of the CE.

- The school, that is, all the pupils in the school, should be divided up into two or three relatively homogeneous groups regarding age and level. These groups are called "lower", "intermediate" and "higher" in chapter 9 of part 2 of the 1720 edition of the CE: "Of the structure and uniformity of schools, and of the furniture suitable for them" (CL 24,218-228). This kind of division into groups which seems obvious now a days, was an innovation in the primary education of the times.

- Each of the groups should be divided up according to "lessons" and "orders" into homogeneous sub-groups for each subject taught.

- Each month, the progress of pupils should be evaluated. This will make it possible to follow up each pupil throughout the year and adapt teaching to his rate of learning and needs.

- The material being taught should be divided up step by step, into units or according to difficulty, as explained in part 1 of the CE. This approach reflects in a concrete way the "division rule" proposed by Descartes in his *Discourse on the Method*.

It can be seen, therefore, that the teaching provided was tailored to the needs of the individual pupil. This approach may seem very elementary to the teachers of today, but it suited the needs of the times, and this made it so successful.

4. THE HUMAN EDUCATION OF THE PUPILS

4.1. The spirit of the time

The humanist movement born of the Renaissance exalted man, his learning and his mastery of the world. At the end of the 17th century, however, it still affected only a minority of people: rich people who lived a life of ease; people who had access to so-called intellectual or humanist culture; people who, because of their social background, had been initiated into the refinement of civilised life and good manners; in other words, as we would say nowadays, privileged people. The situation of the common people, the vast major-

ity of the population, was quite different. This explains why the efforts made in the 17th and 18th centuries to acculturate this section of the population reflected also the desire to educate socially, to civilise. The verb "civilise" can be understood in two ways. It can indicate either access to civilisation in general, or the adoption of behaviour patterns typical of the 17th century, that is, "propriety and politeness". See J. Pungier's article in *Lasallian Themes 1*.

In the days of De La Salle there were two distinct and even opposed cultures: intellectual culture and

popular culture. Without going into details, we can say that they were different in almost everything. However, overall technical, economic and cultural progress heralded profound changes in the lifestyle of the common people. Since the leading proponents of intellectual culture were also those who had wealth, power and initiative, these tended quite naturally to impose it upon the people.

To throw some light on the terms "propriety" and "politeness", we can look at some definitions. These will enable us at the same time to judge what was at stake, or what was the ambition of the acculturation process. We take our definitions from the *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle* (supervised by François Bluche, Paris, Fayard, 1990).

BIENSEANCES (propriety): "Sign of politeness, courtesy. Furetière calls *bienséance* 'what is proper for something, what gives it grace, what embellishes it'. [...] There are *bienséances* proper to general politeness, others suited to rank. [...] Without *bienséance* there is no true politeness. The Court is the place *par excellence* for *bienséances*".

POLITESSE (synonymous with *civilité* = politeness): "The importance of politeness is great at a time when, within a numerically restricted group, human relations play a primary role. Although relatively homogeneous, this group has different elements in it: gentlemen [= *honnêtes*], talented people [= *de mérite*], high society, galant, that is, elegant persons. [...] Politeness in fact affects all social situations and at the same time safeguards indisputable hierarchical differences".

4.2. The needs of the pupils

The elite were understandably aware of the need the children of the working classes had to be educated. De La Salle expresses this as follows at the beginning of the *Common Rules*: "All disorders, especially those of the artisans and the poor, normally arise from the fact that they have been left to their own devices and have been very badly brought up from an early age. It is almost impossible to put this right when they are older, because the bad habits they have picked up are lost only with great difficulty and almost never entirely, however much care one takes to destroy them, either through frequent instruction or the use of the sacraments. And since the principal benefit that should be expected of the institution of the Christian Schools is that these disorders should be forestalled and their

bad effects prevented, it is easy to realise how importance and necessary it is" (RC 1,6).

As we can see, the Rule needs only a few lines to describe the situation, indicate its negative consequences and affirm the deputising role of the school in education.

The preface of the *Rules of propriety and Christian politeness* recalls the great distance that separates the children of the artisans and the poor from the ideal of the gentleman (*l'honnête homme*). This is why the Christian schools as envisaged by De La Salle, like all other schools of the time, attempt to educate children in propriety and politeness: "Christian propriety, therefore, consists in good and orderly behaviour which is reflected in one's speech and external actions; is inspired by a sentiment of moderation or respect or union and charity regarding one's neighbour; and which takes into account the time, the place and the persons with whom one is conversing. It is this propriety in dealings with one's neighbour which is rightly called politeness" (CL 24, Preface = RB 0,0,9).

4.3 The human education of the pupils

It is interesting to read the chapter of the *Common Rules* (1705 ms) entitled: "Of the way in which the Brothers should behave in school". The behaviour of the teacher described in it is intended to be a concrete example for the pupils to see.

And so we read in articles 13 and 15: "They will watch over themselves very carefully so as to do only what is good and proper in the presence of their pupils, and especially not to allow anything to be seen that suggests levity or anger. [...] They will take care, by their appearance and external behaviour, to give their pupils a constant example of moderation and of all the other virtues they have to teach them and make them practise" (CL 25,37).

The CE reminds the teacher also that his own conduct must be exemplary in front of his pupils if he wishes to foster in them "polite and decent" (*civil et honnête*) behaviour. Let us have a look at three aspects of this education.

4.3.1. SELF-CONTROL

Chapter 1 of the CE gives four pages to this topic, describing the way in which pupils should enter the school when the doors are opened, and how they should behave outside the school. As they wait in the

street, "they should not make any noise by shouting and singing". As they come and go, "they will not be allowed to disturb their neighbours in any way whatsoever. Care will be taken that they walk so calmly in the street [...] that those who pass them will be edified" (CL 24,2 = CE 1,1,4).

Similar behaviour is required during lessons, moving about in the classroom and leaving school (CL 24,93f = CE 8,6). Calmness and recollection are called for in the church (CL 24,2; 24,5; 24,84f = CE 1,1,7; 1,2,3; 8,1f) as is good posture during writing lessons ("Of the way of learning good bodily posture", CL 24,54 = CE 4,6).

A particularly sensitive aspect of this education is correction. One can guess what a high degree of self-control one must have in order to accept corporal punishment, understand the good reason for it, and then thank God and the teacher for it. The aim of correction was always the conversion of the pupil. The text, however, suggests that the "beneficiaries" often found it difficult to accept (CL 24,162f and 169f = CE 15,6,18f and 15,7,1f).

4.3.2. INTERIORITY

"All our external actions, which are the only ones which can be regulated by propriety, must always be and be seen to be characterised by virtue. [...] When giving them rules of propriety, they must never forget to teach them that they must always be practised for purely Christian motives and for those that have in view the glory of God and salvation. [...] They will take care to induce them to do so because of the presence of God" (CL 19, Preface = RB 0,0,3; 0,0,5; 0,0,6).

This concern for training in interiority, which is explained so well in the preface to RB, is found also in the CE. It is the basis of article 1 of chapter 1, and is referred to in several of the articles that follow (CL 24,2f = CE 1,1,7f).

It is reflected also in the insistence that pupils be recollected during the recitation of prayers and during

Mass. No one was to disturb this recollection, not even the teacher, who was to restrict himself to setting an example even if he thought he ought to call someone to order. See in connection with this the three chapters dealing with prayers, Holy Mass and catechism (CL24,75f = CE 7f).

Training in interiority can be seen even more clearly at two particular points of the school day: correction of recalcitrant pupils (CL 24,140f = CE 15) and the daily examination of conscience (CL 24,77f = CE 7,2). The "stubborn pupil" is invited several times to recollect himself and admit his fault. As for the "examination" of conscience included in the evening prayer, it takes up again and continues the "reflections" that accompanied morning prayer.

4.3.3. POLITENESS

De La Salle was aware of the importance of propriety and politeness in everyone's life, and he wished to include them in the education of young pupils. After publishing the *Rules of propriety and Christian Politeness* — a work that was a great success in bookshops for two centuries — he used it as a text for teaching reading in school. It was used in the 8th reading lesson or level, when pupils "were able to read French and Latin perfectly. [...] This book includes all duties towards God and parents, as well as the rules of civil and Christian propriety" (CL 24,39 = CE 3,9,1-2).

The purpose of this kind of reading was to fill the minds of the pupils with ideas they had already begun to put into practice. This can be seen, for example, in the chapter "Of lunch and the afternoon snack", in which De La Salle writes: "You have to make them understand [the parents] that if you want them [the pupils] to eat at school it is in order to teach them how to eat properly, in moderation, with good manners and to pray to God before and after having done so" (CL 24,7f = CE 2,1,10).

5. THE SOCIAL TRAINING OF THE PUPILS

In the 17th century, just as nowadays, the purpose of schools was to prepare pupils to take their place in society and to make this process easier. This concern can be seen in the writings of De La Salle. There are

several passages in his *Meditations* which speak of the need that pupils have to take up an active position in society and in the Church, while being fully aware of the obstacles of all kinds that stand in their way.

5.1. A violent social context

Each age, as it comes along, thinks that it is particularly violent. We have only to think of the present century as it comes to an end. Violence, however, whatever its form, is a hallmark of every century.

In the 17th century, there was great violence, both potentially and in practice. Historical studies (some are mentioned in the bibliography) have described its causes, manifestations and consequences. This violence needs to be borne in mind, because, in those days, educational establishments of all levels were thought of as means of eradicating this evil seed from the hearts of students.

In *Lasallian Themes 1*, the article on *Correction* shows how the educational system progressively provided itself with the preventive and repressive means through which the modern concept of school discipline expresses itself.

5.2. The violence of the pupils

One of the problems facing De La Salle and his Brothers was how, in practical terms, to deal with explosions of violence, aggressive behaviour and confrontational attitudes and reactions, so as to develop more fraternal relationships marked by mutual acceptance, respect, mutual help and even positive goodwill.

There is no doubt that violence existed among the Brothers' pupils. An indication of this is the chapter "On corrections", as is also especially the list of "five vices which must never be pardoned, and which must always be punished by the stick or strap" (CL 24,140f = CE15).

The second vice, called "fighting" (*batteries*) was punishable by the most severe chastisements, which seems to prove that serious fights did in fact break out among the pupils. "All those involved in the fight will be punished in the same way. If two or several pupils were involved in the fight, they will be punished together. If the fight was between a pupil and someone not from the school, the teacher will carefully try to discover whose fault it was, and he will not punish the pupil unless he is certain of his guilt. [...] If pupils have been involved in a fight at school, they will be given an exemplary punishment. The teacher will make them understand that this is one of the worst offences they can commit" (CL 24,158 = CE 15,6,3f).

In the pages that follow, other forms of violence are mentioned, more verbal than physical: they characterise the children as being "naturally impudent and insolent" as well as "stubborn". Such observations give an idea of the uncouthness of these children who had just begun school, and of the difficulty they had in living peacefully together and submitting to the rules of community life (CL 24,161f = CE 15,6,14f).

5.3. Educational measures in the CE

In a certain way, all the second part of the CE, entitled "Of the means of establishing and maintaining order in schools" is an attempt to find means to overcome tension and violence. For the sake of clarity, we can group these means under three headings, according as they are preventive, repressive or constructive.

5.3.1. PREVENTIVE MEASURES: ESTABLISHING A CALM ATMOSPHERE The second part of the CE begins with a list of the "nine principal things that can contribute to the establishment and maintenance of order in schools" (CL 24,115f = CE 11). The one we would like to highlight is the first, "the vigilance of the teacher", which consists, among other things, "in enforcing very strict silence in school". If there is good order in class, the atmosphere becomes such that impatience, aggression, conflicts and anything likely to provoke the underlying violence is forestalled. In this connection, we can refer to what was said earlier about the acquisition of self-control and interiority.

There were times when great care had to be taken in case fighting broke out and spread among the children, as for example, when the children were waiting to go into school or were on their way home. In this connection it is worth reading chapters 1 and 11 of part 1 which deal with going into and leaving school.

This explains both the constant presence of the teacher in school (except for the first half-hour of the morning) — "So that the children being under the care of the teachers from morning till night..." (RC 1,3) — and the way in which the work was organised so that at no time the children were idle. The children were permanently occupied. There was no free time or recreation. The proverb "Idleness is the mother of all vice" was taken very seriously indeed.

5.3.2. REPRESSIVE MEASURES TO SET AN EXAMPLE

Here we are referring to the long chapter 5 of part 2 on correction that we have already quoted. Something can go wrong even in the best organised of worlds. That is why there are punishments and penances listed for all kinds of misdemeanours and not only for violence.

In the 17th century, there was both a strong belief in the value of training and formation through good example, and a fear of the contagious nature of evil. Punishments and chastisement were public in the belief that this would have a dissuasive effect on others.

5.3.3. CONSTRUCTIVE MEASURES:

ESTABLISHING PEACEFUL RELATIONS

The ambition was to educate pupils in propriety in the way De La Salle understood the term in the preface to the RB, where he speaks of "propriety which affects one's neighbour", or when he says: "Propriety and politeness really exist only in the practice of moderation and respect regarding one's neighbour" (CL 19, Preface = RB 0,0,15).

The title of part 2 of the work is significant also: "Of the external signs of respect or special affection one should show in the various actions of one's life, to all the persons in whose presence one performs them and with whom one may have dealings" (*id.*).

There is also the following recommendation he makes to fathers, mothers, masters and mistresses: "If they teach them and make them practise propriety that is shown to one's neighbour, they will induce them to give these signs of benevolence, honour and respect only as if they were giving them to members of Jesus Christ and to living temples animated by the Holy Spirit" (CL 19, Preface = RB 0,0,6).

Such words reveal a Christian view of humanity that invites mutual respect inspired by a religious viewpoint. The meditation for the feast of St Louis, King of France, is similarly inspired, and invites us to consider the individual as an integrated whole:

"Your mission requires you to labour for the good of the Church and that of your country. Your pupils are already members of the State, and will soon be endowed with full citizenship. You will work on behalf of the Church by making them true Christians, submissive to the teaching of their faith and to the truths of the Gospel. You will contribute to the good

of your country by teaching them to read and write and all that pertains to your functions. But you must join prayer to your exterior efforts, for failing this, your action will have little effect" (MF 160,3).

Among the means of establishing peaceful relations, the CE spends much time speaking of silence and the use of the "signal" (CL 24,122-132 = CE 11,3 to 12,7). It advocates also more positive means such as:

- spontaneous relationships formed by the pupils outside of school. De La Salle sees them as very important, especially when he speaks of the influence of good and bad company. However, teachers have very little influence on this sort of relationship.

- officially established relationships in the classroom which have a practical purpose and leave little room for spontaneity. These depend on the initiative of the teacher and are his responsibility.

- the responsibilities given to the pupils described in the chapter entitled "Class Officers" (CL 24,204f = CE 18). The 1706 manuscript speaks of 15 different responsibilities entrusted to the pupils (if we include the "inspector" of the "supervisors" mentioned in the same paragraph). The 1720 edition mentions only 10. De La Salle adopts a practice that is already wide spread in Jesuit colleges and which was advocated by Batencour and Démia.

It would appear that the purpose of these responsibilities was practical: "There will be several officers (= monitors) in the school who will fulfil a number of different functions which the teachers should not and cannot fulfil themselves. [...] All the officers will be appointed by the teacher in each class on the first day of school after the holidays" (CL 24,204 = CE 18,1-2).

It is difficult to say how many pupils in all did these little jobs, because this varied according to the age and size of the class. What was involved, however, was a small area of responsibility and a precise task which helped the good running of the school as a whole. By fulfilling these tasks, the children were able to acquire a kind of professional conscience, concern for others, a sense of service and responsibility. All these were qualities useful in adult life and especially in the "writing profession" which the best of the pupils would enter. It might be interesting to study to what extent the qualities required for the various re-

sponsibilities, which are indicated by the CE, were a good basis for the exercise of these professions and others.

Other kinds of relationships were formed among the children in school. For example:

-The help given to fellow pupils with difficulties during class reading, arithmetic or catechism exercises. Although hardly significant, these forms of help were of a positive nature (see CL 24,25; 24,71; 24,99f = CE 3,2,10; 5,0,13; 9,2).

-The solidarity shown when pupils were asked to start an order all over again in order to help their weaker companions: "The day before the lesson is changed, the teacher will take care to know which pupils, in agreement with the Brother Director or Inspector, cannot be changed, either for their own good, because they are too young, or for the good of the class and of the lesson, in order to ensure that some pupils remain behind to help the others. They will take means to make sure that the pupils are happy to remain in the lesson or order in which they are" (CL 24,23 = CE 3,1,30).

We should not minimise the importance attached to the relations between the pupils and their home environment. This comes out clearly in the passages

of the CE, which show interest in the parents of pupils and in the membership of their family in a craft guild with its particular needs: work, markets, feasts, pilgrimages... See the article by S. Scaglione and E. Costa in *Lasallian Themes 2 on Parents of the pupils*.

Then there is the relationship of the pupil with his parish, in particular, by his attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments of penance and Eucharist. See "Attendance at parish Mass and vespers" (CL 24,95f = CE8,7).

The response of the school to violence consisted, therefore, in maintaining an atmosphere of Christian faith and in teaching the children:

- to mix peacefully with the other pupils and show mutual respect;

- to help one another in their school work;

- to be concerned for others, the responsibility in particular of the "visitors of absent children";

- to work voluntarily for the smooth running of the group, by taking on responsibilities and other forms of mutual help;

- without, however, cutting themselves off from their natural groups, such as their family, their parish and their craft guild.

6. FORMING TRUE CHRISTIANS

Although, for the sake of convenience, we speak of the *Conduct*, or, at most, of the *Conduct of Schools*, we should not forget that the complete title of the work is *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, the last part of the title representing the most important aspect of the work in the eyes of its initial author, St John Baptist de La Salle. If we are to understand this work completely we must take this last aspect into account.

6.1. In a context of religious ignorance

France liked to consider itself a Christian country, but the reality was not always edifying. No doubt daily, weekly, monthly and yearly life was closely linked with the liturgical calendar and was marked by Christian practices. It was also tightly controlled by the Catholic Church through the powers it held and the responsibilities exercised by its hierarchy.

We should remember that the Church was the first of the three social orders, and that the Church, for historical reasons going back to the destruction of the Roman Empire in the West, had numerous and important responsibilities including that of educating. The hold it had on the population at all levels of the social scale was, therefore, very great. In spite of this, the vast majority of the lower classes were ignorant of Christian doctrine and morals.

As early as the end of the Middle Ages, voices were raised denouncing the depth of religious ignorance even among the clergy. The Council of Trent, which ended in 1563, insisted on the need to train priests. This led to the creation of seminaries. In France, it was only in the first half of the 17th century that the first seminaries appeared, and only in the second half that they became widespread. The creation

within the royal circle of the "Council of Conscience" at the instigation of St Vincent de Paul, had a beneficial influence on the choice of candidates for episcopal sees. At the same time, the appearance of numerous treatises on religious subjects, the expansion of ecclesiastical libraries, regular pastoral visitations, the meetings of deanery chapters and spiritual retreats, all served to improve the cultural, spiritual and pastoral standards of priests.

By training its clergy the Church sought to christianise its faithful. Beneath a thin layer of Christian language and worship there lay deeply rooted superstition. It was not disbelief in the strict sense of the term, but rather misbelief, a mixture of Gospel truths and pagan traditions. Despite the pastoral efforts of the Church, the 17th century always remained characterised by the practice of sorcery and magic. Where there was some knowledge of the Christian religion, it was never sufficiently understood or assimilated to modify behaviour or ways of thinking. We can understand the extent of this ignorance and its consequences, when we realise that the clergy of the day considered it as an intrinsic cause of damnation.

The basic task of the Church was, therefore, to christianise or evangelise people properly. Among the various means used to achieve this aim there was the widespread distribution of popular tracts couched in edifying and moralistic language, holy pictures, preaching, parish missions, the teaching of catechism, etc. The overall pastoral thrust of the Catholic Reform movement was fortunately supported by the various companies and societies of priests, the clergy as a whole, the new religious families of men and women, the hospitals and the educational establishments of all levels.

As far as we are concerned, let us concentrate on this last aspect: the school which was wanted and organised by the Church, at a parish or diocesan level, as a place where children, and through them their families, could be catechised and be given moral principles. Even when the courses were limited in scope and attended only for short periods, schools offered two subjects in their curriculum: reading and catechism; and the first was an essential introductory step to the second. We should not, therefore, be astonished at the importance attached in Lasallian schools to the religious instruction and Christian formation of pupils.

6.2. The aims of De La Salle

There are a number of meditations, such as the one for the feast of Pope St Gregory, in which De La Salle summarises the responsibilities of the Christian School regarding the religious formation of children: "It is true that your mission does not require you to preach the Gospel to infidels, but you are expected to teach children the truths of religion and to impregnate them with the spirit of Christianity, which is no less important than to labour for the conversion of pagans" (MF 109,3).

It is important to note that there is a twofold task: instruct and impregnate with the spirit. These two aspects are mentioned in other texts, such as the meditation for the feast of St Remi: "Your mission does not consist in making your pupils Christians" — it is understood they are already baptised — "but rather in making them true Christians. This is all the more necessary as it would avail them but little to have received baptism if they did not live according to the Christian spirit" (MF 171,3).

In this connection, we could read all the MR which speak at length of the ministerial process of announcing salvation in Jesus Christ. There is also chapter 1 of the *Common Rules*, entitled "Of the end and necessity for this Institute", and in particular article 3: "The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that it runs schools so that children, being in the care of the teachers from morning till night, these latter can teach them to live well by instructing them in the mysteries of our religion, and by inspiring them with Christian maxims and thus give them an education suited to their needs".

It is interesting to note how De La Salle sees Christianity as knowledge and action. This explains what he writes in his Preface to the *Duties of a Christian towards God*: "We owe God four things of which we acquit ourselves in the Christian religion. We must know him, adore him, love him and obey him. We know God through faith, we adore him through prayer and sacrifice, we obey him by observing his holy commandments and those of the Church, and by avoiding the sins he forbids us. We cannot love him unless we have his grace which makes us pleasing to him, and this grace is given to us only by prayer and the sacraments" (CL 20,ij = DA 0,0,4).

And so, it is not enough to be a nominal Christian: we must become true Christians. In his article in *Lasallian Themes 1* entitled *Christian*, C. Bueno highlights the progression from the first position to the second. De La Salle comes back frequently to this idea of "true Christian" and of "true disciple of Jesus Christ". He does not minimise the importance of knowing and memorising Catholic doctrine, but this is not enough for him: he wants it to be accompanied by personal conviction and the everyday behaviour that flows from it.

We see this in an extract from MR: "To be saved it is not enough to be instructed in the Christian truths that are purely doctrinal. As we have said already, faith without works is dead; it is like a body without a soul. [...] It is not enough to provide children with the spirit of Christianity and teach them the mysteries and doctrines of our religion. We must teach them also the practical maxims that are found throughout the holy Gospel" (MR 197,2).

6.3. What the CE proposes

A preliminary observation: of the 40 hours the children spend in school each week, half are devoted to activities of a religious nature. To these should be added scholastic activities: we will stress their para-religious nature at a later point. It is more the atmosphere than school activities that creates an environment conducive to the Christian formation of the pupils. We summarise the detailed description given in the CE.

6.3.1. A RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

The classroom is a place that is meant to encourage piety. Its decoration is austere and consists almost exclusively of pious objects: "In each classroom there will also be a paper crucifix, a picture of the most Blessed Virgin, of St Joseph and of the holy Guardian Angel, as well as the five rules indicated in article 5 of chapter 2 of this 2nd part" (CL 24,227).

In the article "Rules whose infraction will be punished", the CE gives five reasons for correction and specifies: "These five things will be indicated in the rules which will be displayed for this purpose in different parts of each classroom. Each of these rules will be phrased as follows: 1. You must not absent

yourself from school nor come late without permission. 2. You must apply yourself in school to study your lesson. 3. You must always write without wasting time. 4. You must follow catechism attentively. 5. You must pray to God with piety in the Church and in school" (CL 24,130f = CE 12,6).

In this way, pupils always had a reminder of their duties before their eyes in class, and a stimulus to behave in a particular way.

6.3.2. RELIGIOUS TEACHING

De La Salle is quite clear about his aims, as the following extracts show:

"They [the Brothers] will make it their first care to teach their pupils the morning and evening prayers, the responses for Holy Mass, the catechism, the duties of a Christian, the maxims and practices that Our Lord Jesus Christ has left us in the Holy Gospel" (RC 7,5).

"They will not accept or keep any pupil in school who does not attend catechism on Sundays and feasts as well as on other days when there is school" (RC 7,8).

"You have been chosen by God to succeed the Apostles in the work of teaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and in imprinting his holy law on the mind and heart of children. This you should do by teaching catechism, which is your chief function" (MF 145,3).

"How fortunate you are in having been called to teach children their religion and to instruct them daily in the catechism" (MF 150,3).

The CE takes up these guidelines and describes how the daily catechism should be organised, including the slight changes occurring on the vigils of holidays, Sundays and feast days. The whole of chapter 9 of the first part is devoted to this. Four and a half hours each week are spent teaching pupils the doctrine of the Church, the mysteries of faith, the liturgical feasts and their meaning.

This teaching is not exclusively theoretical: "During every catechism lesson he [the teacher] will not fail to propose some practices to his pupils, and to instruct them as thoroughly as he can regarding morals and the way one should behave in order to live as a true Christian" (CL 24,102 = CE 9,3,4).

In order to maintain and improve his skill as a catechism teacher, his "chief function" (MF 145,3), the Brother must continue to study and try to improve himself all the time. This exhortation is a recurring theme in De La Salle's Meditations.

We can say, therefore, that the Lasallian school made an important and original contribution to the French catechetical movement of the 17th century. Without going into detail, we can recall that the Founder himself wrote five catechisms under the overall title *Duties of a Christian towards God*.

6.3.3. TIMES FOR PRAYER AND LITURGY

The CE speaks of religious exercises that had to be performed during school time in addition to catechism. These included "the daily prayers which are said in school" (CL 24,75f = CE 7,1f), and others "that are not daily" (CL 24,78f = CE 7,3). A number of pupils, one per class in turn, recite the rosary "in a place set aside in the school for this purpose". On certain days of the year, there is a visit to the Blessed Sacrament exposed in church. Morning and evening prayers are recited together by everybody. When the bell rings on the hour every hour during the day, the pupils listen as a pupil reads out a pious thought.

There was also daily Mass in the nearest church, if possible at the end of the morning. Chapter 8 describes in detail the behaviour prescribed for the pupils during Mass as well as during their procession to the church and back. Everything is done in an orderly fashion, in silence and with dignity, to the great edification of the neighbourhood and faithful.

Several of the responsibilities entrusted to the pupils have to do directly with religious practices:

- the reciter of prayers,
- the pupil responsible during Mass rehearsals to speak the priest's part and who is called the "minister of the Holy Mass",
- the rosary carrier and his assistants,
- the aspergillum carrier (CL 24,206 and 242 = CE 18,2 and 18,5).

Elsewhere, there are instructions "Regarding attendance at the parish Mass and vespers". It is important to accustom the children to take part in parish liturgies and not to make them rely on the school: "They will even inspire them with great esteem and

special affection for the offices of the Church, and especially for those which take place in their parish" (CL 24,95 = CE 8,7,2).

6.3.4. CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR

From the moment pupils arrive at school in the morning till the moment they leave at night they perform a multiplicity of religious signs and gestures.

When they enter: "Their hat should be off and, taking holy water, they should make the sign of the holy Cross.[...] When they are in the middle [of the classroom], they will bow low to the crucifix [...] then they will kneel down to adore God and say a short prayer to the Most Blessed Virgin. When they have done this, they will get up and once again bow in the same way to the crucifix" (CL 24,2f = CE 1,1,9). As the teacher is absent when this takes place, the children must be familiar with this ritual and be willing to perform it.

Similar behaviour is prescribed for pupils when they are corrected: "When a teacher has been obliged to discipline a pupil by punishing him, he will return to his place and the pupil will kneel down quietly before him with his arms folded, and thank him for correcting him. He will then turn towards the crucifix to thank God and to promise him that he will not commit again the fault for which he has just been punished. He will not say all this out loud. The teacher will then tell the pupil to return to his place" (CL 24,172 = CE 15,7,17)."

During prayers and catechism, pupils are expected to have a serious, calm and pious attitude. "The teacher will make sure they do not fidget, do not change posture, that they do not lean on either the bench in front nor on the bench behind, and that they do not touch them, and that they do not sit on their heels, that they do not turn their head to look around them, and especially that they do not touch one another. They will do none of these things if the teacher makes sure they always have their arms folded" (CL 24,81; Cf. CE 7,4,3).

This topic takes up all article 4 of chapter 7: "Of the posture the teacher and the pupils must have during prayers, the manner in which to say them, and the order which should be maintained during them". It is enough to set an almost monastic ideal for a school! (CL 24,81 f = CE 7,4).

6.3.5. MOTIVES BASED ON FAITH

It is interesting to note the motivation behind this behaviour. The text bases itself explicitly on the Christian faith which alone enables the child to accept the teaching he is given and interiorise the behaviour he has been taught: "They will be induced to enter their classroom with profound respect because of God's presence there" (CL 24,2 = CE 1,1,9). "During the day, on the hour, a few short prayers will be said, which will enable the teacher to take stock of himself and renew his attention to the presence of God, and accustom the pupils to think of God from time to time during the day" (CL 24,76 = CE 7,1,4).

In this connection, the teacher's brief comments on the "reflections" included in the morning prayer, and the examination of conscience during evening prayer, are especially effective moments for forming a personal moral conscience in an atmosphere of faith (CL24,77f = CE 7,2).

6.3.6. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

WITH A PREDOMINANTLY RELIGIOUS SLANT It is sufficient to glance through chapters 3 to 6 of the first part of the CE, which deal with secular studies, to realise that reading, writing and arithmetic provide an opportunity to saturate even further the pupils with religious sentiments.

For example, regarding reading:

- the second book contains "Christian instructions"
- reading Latin is learned with the help of a book of psalms
- lesson 7 also is taken from the Latin book of psalms
- lesson 8 uses *Christian politeness*, a work which describes "all the duties towards God and parents, and the rules of civil and Christian propriety" (CL 24,33f = CE 3,9,2).

In teaching writing, the examples used will be "sentences from Holy scripture, or Christian maxims taken either from the Holy Fathers or books of piety".

The author justifies his choice as follows: "One should try to take them from Holy Scripture because, being the Word of God, they will necessarily make a greater impression and touch hearts more deeply" (CL 24,46f = CE 4,2,2f).

When teaching spelling, the teacher will make the pupils "write what they have remembered from their catechism" (CL 24,73 = CE 6,0,3). The 1720 edition adds; "The spelling lesson will be done also as follows: the teacher will say, for example, 'Almighty and Merciful God'. All will write...".

It is impossible to say today whether these methods of Christian formation produced the desired results. When the pupil left school, he was supposed to continue his life of faith by himself, inspired by the ideal of "the true Christian". As De La Salle never tired of saying to his Brothers: "If, like St Barnabas, you are full of faith and the spirit of God, as you should be in your employment, you will make true Christians of those whom you instruct. They will have not only the name but also the spirit. It will be seen in their conduct, and they will be admired for their piety" (MF 134,3).

The next passage, taken from the meditation for the feast of St Ignatius, martyr, is even stronger: "If you are a true lover of Christ you will take every possible means to instil his holy love in the hearts of your children whom you train to be his disciples, and your aim will be that they think often of Jesus, their good and only Master; that they speak frequently of Jesus, that they aspire only after Jesus, and that they live for him alone" (MF 102,2).

What is described here is the Christian who lives a life of faith and bases his behaviour on it. We can see the close link between this quotation and what the *Common Rules* of the Brothers say about the spirit of faith "which should induce [...] not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God" (RC 2,2).

7. THE TEACHERS, THE SECRET BEHIND THE SUCCESS

7.1. The teacher's profile

The CE is supposed to be an effective tool, but its author knows that a school can be successful only if the text is applied by competent teachers. The success of Lasallian schools from the very outset cannot be

understood except in the light of the quality of the teachers that ran them and of the quality of their formation. This is not the place to go deeply into De La Salle's concept of the teacher. We will simply mention a few of the major characteristics referred to in the work.

The 1720 edition of the CE ends with a list of the "twelve virtues of a good teacher", without commenting on them: "seriousness, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety, generosity" (CL 24,118).

Some 60 or so years later, Brother Agathon, Superior General from 1777 to 1798, developed the topic of the 12 qualities in a small book (see below the article on the *Virtues of a teacher* by S. Scaglione & L. Lauraire). The interest of this forum is the way in which teachers are invited to reveal these qualities in their behaviour towards the pupils. This will help us build up the profile of the Lasallian teacher.

From the opening lines, three main characteristics are indicated:

- Interiority which gives rise to seriousness, silence, humility and piety.
- The self-control needed by a teacher in order to act with discernment, maintain personal equilibrium and be a model for his pupils by his prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve and gentleness.
- The commitment of the teacher to his work as an educator and to the exercise of his responsibilities, and his dynamism and professional conscience, shown by his zeal, vigilance and generosity.

The teachers of today will probably not recognise themselves in this picture, because working conditions in school and educational ideals have greatly changed. It should be noted, however, that the *Twelve Virtues*, as presented by Brother Agathon, was a resounding success, and throughout the course of the 19th century it was recommended reading not only for teachers from religious congregations, but for all the teachers of the State schools in France.

7.2. Well-trained teachers

A text that we can usefully study in conjunction with the CE is one that appeared some time after the CE and which is entitled: "The training of new teachers or the third part of the Conduct of schools. Rule of the trainer of new teachers". This text can be found as an appendix to Frere Anselme's 1951 edition of the CE, p. 305f.

This document was produced in a Lasallian setting in the 18th century, and indicates the main areas stressed in training teachers, that is, the defects that have to be corrected — 15 in all! — and the qualities — 10 — that have to be acquired.

This text deals with the training of teachers only from a behavioural point of view. To discover De La Salle's views on the means to be used to impart a spiritual formation which nourished the Christian faith of the teachers and motivated their commitment, we have to turn to his *Meditations*, the *Rules*, the *Collection*, etc. In these texts, the Founder reminds his disciples of their responsibilities towards their pupils, the social importance of their work, its spiritual aims and, as a consequence, of the obligation they are under to become trained in order to be able to exercise their ministry of Christian education with competence. What he says there is not addressed only to young teachers, but to everybody. This is quite understandable, because, according to his educational thinking, however important behaviour may be in order to acquire practical skills, it can never constitute the whole of an educational relationship whose purpose is spiritual.

7.3. Teachers committed to an educational approach

There is no point in looking in the CE for some sort of exhortation directed at teachers. Rather it is the sum total of what is demanded of teachers in the course of the work which reveals how complete their commitment must be. De La Salle uses the expression: "Community exercises and work in school require the whole person" (MH 10).

By his overall behaviour, a teacher must be seen as an example to follow and a model to imitate. It is quite clear that the three attitudes referred to earlier — interiority, self-control and commitment — should be also those of the pupils, as we saw earlier when speaking of the human and Christian education of children.

What initially was possibly only a profession for the teachers must become also a commitment to and for an educational approach. Otherwise, according to De La Salle, teachers are not worthy of the work they do. Certain passages in the CE are very hard in this respect: for example, the pages dealing with the reasons for the absences of pupils, or those regarding the right to correct. Teachers must always be prepared to accept the consequences of their actions.

This total commitment to an educational approach can be seen also in the reminder that the teacher must be with his pupils "from morning till night" (RC 1,3),

and the invitation to the Brother that, in addition to his 40 hours a week in school, he should set aside a large portion of his "private" time for exercises of a scholastic nature: writing, reading, preparation of catechism...

7.4. Teachers working together

The production of the CE was, as we have seen, a corporate effort. Its text is the result of shared research. This approach is a good illustration of Brothers doing work "by association". The teachers of the Little Schools or Charity Schools had to work in isolation. Often it was the case of 1 teacher = 1 school. De La Salle, on the contrary, always wanted his teachers to live and work as a team. The first thing he did in Rheims in 1680 was to gather the teachers together, to make them live together, propose a style of life to them, and make them all use the same method when teaching. When it came to making a commitment by vow in 1694, the Brothers vowed to run schools "together and by association" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,3). There are other episodes in the biography of the Founder which corroborate this fact: for example, his concern to send a companion to Gabriel Drolin, who was alone in Rome, and above all the refusal to send one Brother by himself to country schools.

Team work in the school is organised according to a plan that shares out tasks and responsibilities. The Brother Director or inspector coordinates the work and ensures that the school as a whole runs smoothly. In

this connection, it is worth reading the third part of the CE in the 1706 version : the various details it includes give quite a good portrait of the inspector.

His role involves him in the following tasks: the admission of pupils and their allocation to the appropriate level; during the course of the year, changes from one "order" or "lesson" to another, the appointment of "officers" (monitors), authorisation of rewards or punishments, the choice of topics for catechism, the checking of secondary questions planned by catechism teachers, permission to be absent, the re-admission of pupils after non-authorized absences, the checking and keeping of registers, especially those listing the "good and bad qualities of pupils".

By comparison, relations between teachers seem limited. There is some mention of this, but this is found in the chapter of the *Rules* on community life. The organisation of the school requires, all the same, certain forms of mutual help, in particular when children enter and leave school, when they walk to church and, when the need arises, to supervise two classes at the same time, thanks to a system of communicating doors and glass partitions.

All these aspects of organisation are meant to ensure that a school runs smoothly and offers an effective service to the children of working class parents. Such a school offers a human and Christian education to the poor, which not only does not isolate the underprivileged, but actually helps them to find a place in society.

8. CONCLUSION: A MODEL THAT BORE FRUIT

Are there any conclusions we can draw? The work is so rich that it is not easy to do so. Each new reading reveals new ideas. Rather than attempt an overall assessment, we shall try to give some idea of the impact the work had from the early years of the 18th century onward.

8.1. Initial success

The first biographers of De La Salle and the historians of the origins of the Institute all mention the success of the Brothers' schools from their foundation. Pupils came flocking in, requests to found new schools came from all corners of France as far apart as Calais and Marseille. The good behaviour of the

pupils even outside school was noticed, for example, by the bishop of Chartres (CL 7,374). To what can this success be attributed? Among the possible reasons we offer four which are difficult to deny:

1. The good initial formation and professional quality of the Brothers, the fact they constituted a stable group, devoted to their work and, what is more, inspired by an understanding of gratuity rare in their century.

2. The coherence already stressed between the various parts of the work. This coherence was not a theoretical one, devised in some isolated private study, but arrived at after a period of gradual experimentation involving all the concrete components of an educational establishment. Conversely, the patent success

achieved bears witness to the coherence of the text and to the correct approach used in drawing it up.

3. The pertinence of the model proposed given specific educational needs. The Lasallian school was seen as a good response to the needs of the day for instruction and education in France.

4. An approach which catered for the integral and integrated education of young pupils. Using modern terminology, we would say that the CE offered pupils a number of skills/types of knowledge: life skills, social skills, personal equilibrium, religious faith. The most interesting thing about this is, perhaps, the fact that the various components making up this formation of the person are not separated, as school subjects very often are nowadays, but that they intermingle in all school activities. In this sense we can speak of integral and integrated formation: the intellectual, professional and spiritual dimensions of the person are addressed simultaneously.

The educationist and educational historian Jean Vial writes as follows : "In 1720, one year after the death of the founder, *The Conduct of Schools* was published. It was still being reprinted in 1940. It is a very complete manual of pedagogy, defining with meticulous relevance the programmes and methods of the Little Schools, but also the attitudes of humble and gentle teachers who were also stubborn and conquering. Like John Baptist de La Salle himself" (*Les Instituteurs*, Paris, Delarge, 1980, p. 28).

8.2. The model is taken up by others

While not wishing to give a history of the text, we can recall that the CE, reference work that it was, continued to inspire the Brothers throughout the 18th century without, however, hindering necessary changes. Educational needs changed with society. In the course of the century, schools introduced new subjects into their curriculum: geometry, hydrography, navigation, commerce, accounting, etc., and pupils tended to stay longer in school.

There was a new edition of the CE in 1742. When the Revolution broke out, an extensively revised version was being worked on and was nearly ready for the printers, but the suppression of teaching congregations in 1792 halted the process. The following century saw the spread of elementary education through-

out the country, and De La Salle was often and variously referred to.

In a recent article, S. Scaglione tried to draw up a list of all the various editions of the CE between 1720 and 1965. His list included 26 editions (*Rivista lasalliana*, 1991, N° 3). Most were published in the 19th century and were "enriched" or "revised" to fit in with the century. This success in the bookshops can be explained in part at least, by the powerful impression left on the collective memory by the schools of the Brothers in the 18th century.

8.3. An inspiration for today?

It is noticeable that the appearance of revised versions ends with the beginning of the 20th century, a time that coincides with the internationalisation of the Lasallian congregation. When laws were passed in 1904 onwards forbidding French Brothers to teach in their own country, many went abroad.

It is easy to explain how the process of adaptation came to an end. If for two centuries the CE had been able to adapt to the various changes of the French school system, it was no longer possible to offer a normative text which was suitable for the numerous different countries in which the Institute was now establishing itself.

If we thought of producing a new *Conduct of Schools* for the world as a whole at the present time, we could never go back to the literality of the original text. There has been much progress in psycho-pedagogy, didactics and other educational sciences which enable us to see school life in a different light and, if possible, in a better one. Another factor is the mass of national and regional pedagogical cultures and traditions, some of which are not connected in any way with the French origins of Lasallian thinking.

AH the same, the CE can help those who wish to analyse in a given situation the aims and objectives on the basis of which an educational institution is founded, the motives that inspire teachers, the school learning process, the research and application process which makes progress and adaptation possible.

This text could also suggest an anthropology stemming from a unified vision of the individual and involving team work by teachers with a view to creating an overall educational model which values the spiritual and Christian formation of young people.

Complementary themes

Artisans	Employment	Parents of the pupils
Association	Example	Poor
Brothers	Exercises	Prayer
Catechism	Formation	Pupil-teacher relation
Christian	Gentleness	Reflection
Christian teacher	God's work	Reward of the teacher
Correction	Gratuity	School
Decorum	Guardian angels	Silence
Director	Heart	Spirit of Christianity
Disciples	Hymns	Vigilance
Duties of a Christian	Instruction	Virtues of a teacher
Education	Ministry	Zeal

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72. DEVOTION AND DEVOTIONS

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1. TERMINOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

1.1. Devotion

Throughout the 17th and 18th century, the meaning of the word *devotion* remained unchanged: it was a manifestation of "piety", the "virtue of religion" or "the first of the virtues". Its theological basis, its nature, causes and effects can be found in the works of St Thomas Aquinas.

St Thomas tells us that devotion is **an act of the virtue of religion**, a virtue which inclines a person to give God the worship due to him. This establishes clearly the proper relationship between a free creature and God. The virtue of religion has God as its object, principle and end: it subordinates the creature to its creator. Man manifests his dependence on God by of-

fering something exterior to himself: sacrifices, gifts. In this way man acknowledges God's sovereignty over him. The cause of devotion is extrinsic to man, according to St Thomas. God alone can be the cause of such a virtue, which is an essentially supernatural principle of human activity. Devotion is, therefore, a gift of God, who is love and who awakens in man love that is charity, because, of himself, man can do nothing.

St Thomas teaches that **devotion produces joy and sadness in the soul**. Joy is its main effect: by meditating on God's goodness to him, man experiences joy and the desire to do his will. He feels sadness also when he sees how imperfect and limited he is: he cannot pay God back in full, as he deserves.¹

Devotion is related to other religious acts. Since religion is the bond that unites man to God, devotion is the recognition of this bond. It includes all the personal and corporate acts which form the substance of this bond, such as meditation, contemplation and public worship. The role of external religious acts is to express devotion. We speak of devotion and prayer as being interior acts of the virtue of religion, hence the link between devotion and the vows of religion, and between devotion and Christian perfection. Without devotion, there is no true act of religion. And yet it is essential in Christian life: man turned towards God seeks to fulfil his will in all things.²

1.2. Devotions

Devotion is the interior act of the virtue of religion. Devotions are its exterior manifestation. They normally go together, as a particular form of the worship of God. Devotions are a means, not an end. De-

votion to the saints, for example, does not stop with them, but must lead on to God.

A devotion, therefore, is always a concentration on a specific aspect of spiritual life, and implies acts carried out in everyday life, called "acts of devotion", such as, for example, vocal prayers or visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The 17th century was noted for its devotion to the Incarnation of the Word and to his "states" : poor, humble, obedient...³

The role of devotions is to help the personal and community life of a person. **Not all devotions are equal:** they correspond to different levels of the spiritual life. Since it is the Holy Spirit who directs and inspires souls, it is important to be docile to his promptings and, as a consequence, know how to discern what comes from him. A person chooses the devotion that gives most nourishment to his spiritual life. Among criteria to bear in mind when choosing a devotion, there is the approval of the Church, the dogmatic value of the devotion.

2. DEVOTION IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS

2.1. Definition

In the *Duties of a Christian*, De La Salle defines devotion as "a virtue which makes a person serve God and perform the exercises of religion with affection and promptitude" (CL 21,138 = DB 2,17,12). He follows clearly the teachings of St Thomas.

"Piety", on the other hand, has a variety of meanings in his writings. See the article on *Piety* in this volume, by A. Loes. It can be synonymous with devotion: "It is important that you teach them to pray to God, as our Lord taught those who followed him [...] with much reverence (= piety) and in secret" (MR 202,2).

Sometimes De La Salle juxtaposes the two terms to give the words greater weight: "It is necessary to attend all the offices and services of the Church with much piety and devotion" (CL 22,91 = DC 30,7,9).

2.2. True devotion

De La Salle does not spend much time on denouncing sham devotion, which is a form of hypocrisy. Instead he concentrates on singing the praises of devotion that is "true, genuine, sincere, pure".

It is enlightened. The Christian — and this is the aim of catechism and school — must know the message of religion, must know what his relationship with God and the saints consists in, and what commitments in his life they imply.

And so, regarding devotion to Mary, he says: "It will avail us but little to be persuaded of the obligation we are under of having a special devotion to Our Lady, unless we know what this devotion consists in" (MF 151,3). Likewise, speaking of the guardian angels, De La Salle explains that we owe our good angel devotion "because of his kindness towards us and confidence because of the care he takes of us" (MF 172,3,1). Elsewhere, he adds that devotion must be "truly Christian" (CL 22,43 = DC 20,5,7), and speaks of "true and solid piety" (MF 131,2,2).

It resides in the heart. Mental prayer is "an interior activity which has to be practised in the depths of the soul and not purely in the mind or in the superficial part of the heart" (CL 14,3 = EM 1,1-4). This aspect is referred to in other writings. In prayer, it is "not necessary for devotion to be felt", but it is often

useful that it remains "only interior and [...] that our heart is fully penetrated with it" (CL 20,427 = DA 402,1,8). Communion requires "great interior purity" and "tender devotion" (CL 17,247 = I 6,2,1).

It implies certain attitudes: fervour (CL 20,473 = DA 405,1,10), *affection* (CL 21,299 = DB 4,13,1), *attention* (id. 302 = 4,13,6) and humility (CL 17,14 = 11,4,8). Our devotion to Mary must be continual (MF 151,3). One must ask God for it (MF 164,3).

2.3. Prayer and devotion

Prayer and devotion go together. We see this from the eight conditions that must characterise prayer: "purity of heart, attention, devotion, fervour, humility, resignation, trust and perseverance" (CL 20,424 = DA 402,1,1; Cf. CL 21,251 = DB 4,3,1). Devotion sustains attention during prayer. We pray to God with devotion when we feel a tender affection for God and for all that concerns his service (CL 20,426f = DA 402,1,7). Devotion in our prayers draws down upon us the goodness and grace of God. This is the reason why he is so willing to give us what we ask of him (CL 21,254 = DB 4,3,7).

Constancy in prayer is the great lesson De La Salle draws from the example (CL 20,436 = DA 402,2,4; CL 20,471 = DA 405,1,17) and teachings of Christ: to pray often (CL 20,414 = DA 401,2,7), with perseverance and even importunity, so to speak (CL 20,433 = DA 402,1,21; Cf. MD 37,2), for "whoever asks, receives" (MD 38,1; Cf. MD 42,3).

The Brothers are not allowed to have private devotions. "They will restrict their devotions to those that are common and ordinary in the Institute" (RC 4,12). According to Blain, De La Salle declared "devotion to the rosary as a devotion that had been practised in the Church for many centuries and which had been authorised by the popes" (CL 8,490). It was perhaps because of its novelty, that he did not adopt to any great extent the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which was growing at the time. As the theologian and spiritual director that he was, he always wished his devotions to be **in line with the guidelines of the Church**, especially where the liturgy was concerned (CL 20,152 = DA 212,0,3; CL 17,15 = I 1,5,3). He could not be more opposed to those who mock devotion (CL 21,88 = DB 2,4,8) or those who do not practise it (CL 17,220 = I 4,1,2).

3. LITURGY AND DEVOTION

We find it difficult nowadays to associate liturgy and devotion, because the major liturgical cycles of the year — those of Christmas and Easter — do not seem really compatible with private devotions. At the time of the Founder, however, the liturgical seasons were seen rather as being moved forward by the feasts of Christ, the Most Blessed Virgin and the major saints, establishing in this way a sort of hierarchy of devotions (Cf. CL 22,4 = DC 0,1,3). See G. Beaudet's article in this volume entitled *Celebrating*.

3.1. Sacraments, ceremonies and blessed objects

The Church has established ceremonies for the administration of the sacraments "1. to induce us to have more respect for the sacraments, 2. to stimulate and increase the devotion of the priests who administer them, and of the faithful who receive them"... (CL 21,156 = DB 3,2,16). "There are some ceremonies

which produce grace in virtue of the prayers of the Church which accompany them; there are others which draw most of their power from the devotion of those who take part in them" (CL 20,210 = DA 301,2,14). De La Salle recalls that in confirmation "we must receive the blessing of the bishop with faith, respect and devotion" (CL 21,175 = DB 3,8,4). In baptism, the priest touches the nostrils of the child "to open them so that they may distinguish from among other things, the good odour of faith and devotion" (CL 20,228 = DA 302,3,13).

The 3rd volume of the *Duties of a Christian* (CL 22 = DC) speaks of the symbolism of **blessed objects**. Candles represent Jesus Christ, the true light. They stand for the faith, joy and devotion of good Catholics in the presence of Our Lord during the celebration of his feasts and those of the saints (28 = 20,2,1). Holy water, taken with faith and devotion, chases away bad thoughts and temptations, and pre-

pare a person for prayer and the performance of good actions (32 = 20,3,6). Blessed bread brings health to soul and body when received with faith, devotion and respect (45 = 20,6,5). We receive the blessed ashes with humility, sorrow for our sins and devotion, asking God for the grace to be truly penitent (53 = 20,9,7).

3.2. Mass and Holy Communion

When De La Salle uses the word *Eucharist*, he refers to communion or to the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar (MD 47-55), but not to the Mass in which, following the theology of the time, he makes a clear distinction between the sacrificial and the sacramental aspect.

To make it easier for Brothers and the faithful in general to participate in "the sacrifice of the Holy Mass" (CL 17,5 = I 1,2), the Founder composed a number of *Instructions*, in which he insists on the "interior dispositions" we should bring to Mass (3 = 1,1,3). In order to "participate fully in this holy sacrifice", we must "conform, with as much interior attention and devotion as possible, with the intentions of Jesus Christ himself (14 = 1,4,8).

As an apostle "of frequent communion"⁴ (MD 54), De La Salle reminds all the faithful of the desire of the Council of Trent that the faithful "should have such great respect for this adorable sacrament and such

devotion to it, that they should be in a state to receive it frequently. [...] The Church wishes Christians to have piety that is out of the ordinary, so that they can communicate frequently" (CL 17,240 = I 5,3,1). The first Christians communicated often, not through obligation, but "moved by piety and devotion" (CL 20,252 = DA 304,3,3). The Founder invites his readers to have "great fervour in order to communicate with as much devotion as possible" (CL 17,245 = I 5,4,6; Cf. CL 21,215 = DB 3,18,3).

De La Salle strongly rejects lack of fervour as a pretext for not communicating. He tells the Brothers: "As the Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of love, we ought to have a tender love for Our Lord when we receive it. For this reason, devotion is one of the chief dispositions which we should bring to it. How then, some will say, can we possibly communicate frequently when we have no devotion? You may rest assured that the best form of devotion consists in having a horror for sin" (MD 55,3).

You have no fervour? "Go and receive communion, then, to obtain some", Blain writes, recording the Founder's words (CL 8,486). The respect we ought to have for Jesus coming within us "consists in removing from your (our) heart every imperfection, and going to meet him with a soul carefully prepared with much devotion" (MF 147,2,2; Cf. CL 21,214 = DB 3,18,1).

4. DEVOTION AND MINISTRY

4.1. The devotion of the Christian teacher

In order to tend towards the perfection of his state and work for the Christian education of poor children, the Brother needs "solid piety" (MF 120,2 & 133,1). "Piety must be the portion of your pupils as well as your own" (MF 136,3). De La Salle shows the Brothers that the pupils reflect the behaviour — warts and all — of their teachers. If your pupils lack modesty in church or pray to God "without devotion, people will see from their misbehaviour that you yourself have no devotion" (MD 60,3; Cf. 136,2). That is doubtlessly why piety is one of the "twelve qualities of a good teacher" (R 5).

It is not a question of only imitation: the Brothers must have "a piety that is out of the ordinary" in order to remain in their state and to acquit themselves well

of their ministry, which is to procure for the children "the spirit of religion and Christianity" (MF 186,2). In this way, devotion will pass from their hearts to those of the children entrusted to them.

4.2. Inspiring children with devotion

The pupils of the Brothers were in close touch with popular forms of devotion. (Cf. the article *Celebrating*, § 5 & 6). De La Salle suggests practices that are intended to interiorise the Christian message. This is what he calls "instilling the Christian spirit" (MF 119,2). Here are some of these practices:

- **Attention to the presence of God:** "At every hour of the day, a few short prayers will be said which will help teachers to renew their attention to themselves and to the presence of God, and will accustom the

pupils to think of God from time to time during the day" (CE 7,1,4).

- **Recollection** in church: "It is important for the teacher to watch over the conduct of his pupils especially when they enter the church, to prevent them from making any noise, either with their feet, or with their tongue" (CE 8,2,3).

- **Reading** good books: "A good way of inspiring children with piety and making them acquire it is to make them read good books that can make a good impression on their mind" (MF 177,1,2).

The ability to do this is one of the fruits of learning to read in French. See the article *Reading in French* by J.L. Schneider, in the present volume.

5. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE'S DEVOTIONS

Of the first three biographers, it is John Baptist Blain who gives us the fullest account. He provides a great deal of evidence regarding the virtues of the Founder of the Brothers and, particularly, his taste for God, his love for Our Lord, his devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin and the saints (CL 8,270f and 48 If).

De La Salle's own writings enable us to put the eloquence of his hagiographer into perspective and, in particular, to see the motives for a devotion whose form might seem strange in other cultures.

Saturnine Gallego shows that, in De La Salle's writings, the spirit of faith and religion is expressed "in affectionate devotional forms through which his convictions, his virtues and his very life are revealed in all simplicity and find their nourishment".⁵

5.1. To God

The spirit of religion with which De La Salle was filled impelled him "to offer the Sovereign Majesty of God the worship and veneration" that was his due (CL 8,233). Wherever he was, but especially in church and when he was celebrating Mass, he was attentive to the presence of God. His personal resolutions made him careful to raise his heart to God each time he began an action, and to pray and renew his attention to God whenever he entered a house or his room (CL 10,116 = EP 3,0,18-19). Blain speaks of "his care to make the presence of God familiar and continual" (CL 8,290), by having recourse to God on all occasions and praying to him at all times.

"His heroic self-abandonment to Divine Providence" (CL 8,254) is shown by his resolution to look always upon the work of his salvation and the establishment of the Institute as the work of God — "Opus tuum" (CL 10,115 = EP 3,0,8) — and to wait for orders from Providence before acting (CL 10,115 = EP

3,0,8-9). He expresses the same idea when he writes to Drolin: "I leave it to Divine providence to make the first move and then I am satisfied" (LA 18,17). We should not misunderstand this attitude: as soon as the will of God is revealed, De La Salle puts aside all his repugnance and works for the establishment of the Institute without looking back. Self-abandonment is not resignation. In time of famine, De La Salle urges his Brothers not to lose confidence: "Do not fear. God never fails those who hope in him" (CL 8,60). And when the Brothers are close to discouragement, he asks them: "Are you doing that for God?" (CL 8,295).

5.2. To Jesus Christ

"His love for this Divine Saviour was tender, affectionate, efficacious and effective", writes Blain (CL 8,481), speaking of the mysteries of Christ which were the source of the Founder's devotion: the holy childhood, the Passion and the Eucharist (CL 8,484). In DC, De La Salle includes an instruction on "the devotion we should have to Our Lord", recalling that Christ "redeemed us" and that it is he who "communicates the life of grace" to us. In his heavenly glory, "he [Jesus Christ] is the head, the model and the mediator of all Christians" (CL 22,187 = DC 42,13,2-3).

Let us recall De La Salle's definition of a mystery: "By the mysteries of Our Lord we mean the principal actions which the Son of God made man performed and carried out for our salvation". We try to understand their spirit "by noting what the holy Gospel says about them, or by a simple view of faith, [...] or by some reflection [...] which leads to and inspires devotion to this mystery, and causes one to have a sentiment of interior respect when considering it" (CL 14,59f = EM 7,177f).

"Are you careful to take Our Lord as your model when you speak and during your recreation?" (MD 30,1). The *Collection* suggests the following topics of conversation for the recreations that follow meals: "The life of Jesus Christ and the special devotion one should have towards him, considered in his mysteries, [...] the means to acquire and maintain this devotion and to inspire the children with it" (CL 15,33 = R 10,2,5).

Jesus is also the model for the apostolate: "You must study in the Gospel how Jesus brought his disciples to practise the truths of the Gospel" (MR 196,2). Like the Good Shepherd, the Brother must watch more particularly over those who tend to be dissolute (MD 56,1), and pray much for those who are the least inclined to piety (MD 56,3).

5.2.1. THE CHILD JESUS

De La Salle acquired a great devotion to the childhood of Christ from the French school of spirituality⁶ and in particular from the institutes founded under the patronage of the Child Jesus by Barre and Roland. Blain mentions that De La Salle made the group of young men preparing to become Brothers in Rheims consecrate themselves to the Child Jesus: "On Christmas Day, he would consecrate himself to the holy Child Jesus in their presence. The first time especially when he did so, his devotion was so evident and so striking that they were all greatly impressed by it" (CL 7,280).

The *Explanation of the Method of mental prayer* suggests "the birth of Our Lord" as a subject for meditation. Such contemplation produces a number of fruit in us, especially "a deep love for Our Lord and a tender devotion to him considered as the infant God, being born through love of us" (CL 14,67 = EM 8,197; cf. CL 22,141 = DC 42,2,7). The "spirit of childhood", according to De La Salle, consists in "simplicity, docility, purity and in contempt for riches and social success" (CL 14,61 = EM 7,183). As Gallego says, this is "a very generous attitude of faith".⁷ One very fine prayer expresses "love for the child Jesus" (CL 14,70 = EM 8,202); another invites us to adore Our Lord as a child in the arms of his holy mother (*id.* 75 = 8,215), and then to unite ourselves with him (*id.* 84 = 10,232). All these texts are deeply biblical and based on solid theology. Some of the suggested resolutions refer to devotional practices common among the Brothers: "I propose to have a special devotion to your di-

vine childhood, and to recite its litany with great attention. I shall honour especially the 25th of every month" (*id.* 83 = 9,228,5).

The meditations for December 24th and 25th lay great stress on the "abnegation" of Jesus in order to highlight more powerfully the purpose for which the Son of God came down on earth and wishes to come down into our hearts: "In order to make us sharers in his nature and become truly heavenly men" (MF 85,3). "In choosing our present state, we should have prepared ourselves for abasement/ like the Son of God when he became man" (MF 86,2). The humble condition of the Brothers puts them on the same level as the poor they have to teach: "For you can attract them to God only in so far as you resemble Jesus at his birth" (MF 86,3).

5.2.2. THE PASSION

Blain writes about the admirable devotion of De La Salle to "the abnegation and sufferings" of Christ, saying that he encouraged the Brothers to "overcome their sufferings by contemplating those of the Saviour of mankind", and that he established for them the daily practice of reciting the litany of the Passion "Jesus poor and humble of heart" (CL 8,484).

De La Salle's meditations for Holy Week (MF 23-28) give a clear indication of his sentiments. He is particularly struck by Jesus' abandonment of his human will, which is totally submissive to the divine will (MD 24,3); by a God who wishes all people to be saved (MR 193,3). Jesus wished to suffer so much in order that our salvation might be accomplished (MD 25,3). De La Salle takes no pleasure in recalling the sufferings of Good Friday. Instead he expresses his conviction that "not to wish to cease sinning is not to desire that Christ's sufferings should end" (MD 27,3). "The fruit we should derive from the contemplation of the wounds of our divine Lord is that we should abandon sin entirely, mortify our passions, and go against our inclinations which are too human and too natural" (MD 28,2). In the meditation for the Finding of the Holy Cross, we are told by the author of the *Imitation* that the whole of our daily life can share in the *kenosis* of Christ: "Accustom yourself, therefore, from this day on, to love this holy cross since you have it always to hand" (MF 121,1).

It would be difficult to understand this devotion if we separated it from the ministry of the Brothers and

from the mysticism of St Paul: "It makes me happy [...] in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ" (Col 1,24). "Since you are obliged to help your disciples to save themselves, you must lead them to unite all their actions to those of Jesus Christ. [...] This is how you must teach them to benefit from the death of Jesus Christ" (MR 195,1). The martyrdom of St Andrew inspires the Founder to ask his Brothers: "Have you as much love of suffering as St Andrew had for the cross on which he died? Do the trials, afflictions and persecutions which you have to sustain in the exercise of your ministry augment your zeal and, far from discouraging you, lead you to endeavour ever more ardently to make Jesus Christ known and loved?" (MF 78,3).

When he contemplates the wound in the side of Christ, we hear the language of love and imitation. He speaks of drawing from the heart of Jesus into our own "sentiments of Christian patience, entire resignation and perfect conformity to the will of God" (MD 28,3).

5.2.3. THE HEART OF JESUS

The Founder knew of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was spreading in his time: while St John Eudes and his disciples were the chief proponents, there were also others such as Canon Blain. De La Salle maintained a certain reserve regarding this devotion on which the Church had not yet pronounced.

There are, however, some allusions to the heart of Christ in De La Salle's writings, which reveal a discreet but considerable devotion. He speaks of putting our hand into the wound in the side of Jesus, like St Thomas, "not so much to strengthen your faith, as to penetrate, if possible, right to the heart of Jesus, in order to draw from it into your own, sentiments of Christian patience" (MD 28,3).

In order to attain the unity Christ asked from his Father for his disciples, De La Salle tells: "Ask therefore the Lord of all hearts to make yours one with those of your Brothers, in that of Jesus" (MD 39,3).

Communion makes possible "a heart to heart talk with Jesus" (CL 15,117 = R 16,9,6; CL 17,275 = I 6,27,1). Mental prayer offers the same opportunity: "I beg you very humbly, lovable child Jesus, to draw me into your divine heart" (CL 14,85 = EM 10,232,2).

"Unite, I beg you, my mind and my heart with yours" (*id.* 105 = 14,285,2). "I beg you that your Spirit and divine heart may teach my mind and my heart contempt for all that the world esteems and pursues with so much eagerness" (*id.* 120 = 18,320,3).

5.2.4. THE EUCHARIST

There is a great deal that could be said about De La Salle's devotion to the sacrament of the altar. His recollection rivalled that of Bauyn (CL 7,330); he was often "lost to the world" after celebrating Mass (CL 8,484). His zeal for frequent and fervent communion is well known (CL 8,485f) as well as his writings connected with this. See § 3.2. above and the article on the *Mass* by L. Salm in the present volume.

5.3. The "most Blessed Virgin"

De La Salle celebrated the feasts of Our Lady with special devotion, Blain tells us (CL 8,490). This "faithful devotee of the divine Mary" had frequent recourse to her. He finished each action of the day by a prayer to the most Blessed Virgin, and ended his mental prayer by consecrating himself to her by saying the prayer *O Domina mea*. His final prayer before dying was the one with which he ended each day, *Maria mater gratiae* (CL 8,490).

De La Salle treats of the devotion to the most Blessed Virgin in his catechism and in MF 151. He tells his pupils that Mary is "our good mother, because Jesus gave her to be a mother to all who were devoted to her". The eternal Father "gave her a rank which is above that of all other pure creatures", giving her "the plenitude of all that is good, by placing in her womb the divine Word" (CL 22,211f = DC 43,6).

To the Brothers De La Salle says that Mary is the principal protector of their society and that they owe her "such special devotion" that it will be passed on to the children they teach (MF 151,1).

The Brother will show his devotion to Mary in his daily life by a number of practices:

- by speaking during recreation of the life of the most Blessed Virgin, as well as of the importance of having a great devotion to her and of making the children acquire it (CL 15,33f = R 10,2,6);
- like all Christians, by trying to imitate her virtues, especially her humility and her great love of purity (CL 22,211 = DC 43,5,6);
- by celebrating her feasts with solemnity (MF 151,3,2),

even those which were working days (RC 30,21,12);
 - by reciting the Office of the Most Blessed Virgin with special piety and devotion, so as to draw from it all the fruit the Church desires (CL 20,483 = DA 405,3,7);
 - by reciting the rosary, a prayer that is very pleasing to God and to Mary (CL 21,300 = DB 4,13,2), a point of Rule in the Institute (MF 151,3; RC 4,11 & 27,16; CL 10,116 = EP 3,0,16), and a prayer the Brothers make their pupils recite regularly (CL 24,76; 85; 89 = CE 7,1,3; 8,1,6; 8,3,6).

In his Will and Testament, the Founder recommends the Brothers "to have a special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin and St Joseph, patron and protector of their society" (CL 10,118 = EP 4).

5.4. The other saints

As Blain tells us, De La Salle "put his Institute under the protection of St Joseph at its very beginning" (CL 8,492). By doing so, he was following one of the major devotional trends in 17th century France.⁹ The teaching Brother's work was very similar to that of Joseph : to care for and guide Jesus Christ in his external conduct. The Brother could, therefore, take

him as his model and, like him, excel in virtue (MF 110,1), imitating in particular his love of and fidelity to obedience (*id.*, 2).

De La Salle left the Brothers a number of very fine prayers to St Joseph (CL 14,91 and 108 = EM 10,244 & 14,290). He left others for the pupils (CL 18,41 = E 10,4). See in this same volume the article on *Devotion to St Joseph* by M. Buttigieg and L. Lauraire.

De La Salle shows us in the lives of the saints the ever-varied intervention of the Holy Spirit in the history of mankind. This is one of the topics Brothers should speak about (CL 15,62f = R 10,2,7 f). The meditations for the feasts of the saints, like the instructions in the catechisms, offer their virtues for our imitation. De La Salle had a special devotion to John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles, St Cassian, schoolmaster and martyr, and "those in whom the spirit of [their] Institute was illustrated most clearly" (CL 8,493). Among the women saints, Teresa of Avila is the only one mentioned by Blain. De La Salle had "an inexplicable affection for her" (*id.*). He recommended all Christians to have a devotion to diocesan and parish patron saints (CL 22,213 = DC 44,0,1).

6. DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

"The exercises of the community and the work in school require a person full time" (MH 10). That is why the Brothers cannot have private devotional practices, belong to confraternities (RC 4,12),¹⁰ or even choose the days they will go to confession or communicate (LA 37,11).

We have already seen a certain number of practices recommended by the Founder to his Brothers, to their pupils and to those who read his writings. In practical terms, a devotion expresses itself by the practice of virtues and is nourished by exercises of piety.

The Rule prescribed **for the Brothers** daily mental prayer (4,1), communion twice a week (4,5), weekly confession (4,9), the rosary, the act of adoration (4,13), the frequent recall of the presence of God (2,7), the frequent reading of the Word of God, considered as "their first and principal Rule" (2,3), prayer for deceased Brothers (23), the invocation "Live Jesus in our hearts", referred to as the "community signal" (27,1) and a practice dear to the French school of spir-

ituality. Recommended also are ejaculatory prayers (CL 15,63 = R 13,22; MD 70,3,2), visits to the Blessed Sacrament (CL 14,24 and 42 = EM 2,80 and 4,136,2; CL 25,160 = RD 2,8; LI 122,4f).

To sustain the piety of **the pupils**, the Founder composed a manual of piety (CL 18 = E) and suggested a number of practices: daily Mass (CL 24,84 = CE 8,0,1), visits to the Blessed Sacrament (CL 24,202 and 255 - CE 17,3,6 and 21,3,4; MD 47,2,1), reception of the sacraments (MR 198,2 and 200,2), morning and evening prayers, grace before and after meals, the daily recitation of the rosary (CL 24,202 = CE 17,3,7). He recommended them also to renew their baptismal promises (CL 22,200 = DC 43,2,4). He suggested also that pupils should be given "pious rewards" to encourage them (CL 24,138 = CE 14,1,2), consisting of holy pictures or plaster medallions.

As for the faithful, De La Salle encouraged them to take part in processions (CL 22,13 = DC 10,4,6) and pilgrimages with devotion (21 = 10,6,3). He rec-

ommends also that they should take full part with faith and fervour in the usual practices of confraternities (18- 10,5,1).

True to the spirit of the Council of Trent, De La

Salle tries to channel the devotional trends of his times so as to enlighten the faith of the faithful, and lead them to true conversion and the practice of the sacraments.

This brief glance at "devotion" in the life and writings of the Founder of the Brothers shows the influence of the spirit of his century, a time of strong popular religiosity, in which the relationship with God and the saints was seen as something natural. But there was much more.

De La Salle made the virtue of religion the basis and support of his personal life and that of his Institute. The spirit of faith, nourished by Holy scripture and the teachings of the Church, is the guiding principle of his thinking, his judgments and his actions. Faith makes him look for God and his will in everyday life. Obedience to divine inspiration discerned in events and trust in Providence were two of the means by which he remained open to the inspiration of the Spirit. For him, devotion was nothing else but trust in God.

The person of Jesus and his Gospel are very much part of De La Salle's writings: "The first effect of faith is to attach us firmly to the knowledge, love and imitation of Jesus Christ and to union with him" (CL 15,81 = R 15,1,3). The present Rule (1987) says the same thing: "It is above all to Jesus Christ, to his Gospel and to his Spirit that the Brothers are faithful" (art. 142).

Regarding devotion to the saints, De La Salle stresses their role as special witnesses to the life and holiness of the Church. They followed Christ; let us, therefore, walk in their footsteps and imitate their virtues. In the life of the Christian, De La Salle highlights the role of the liturgy, and mental prayer, first and principal of the Brother's daily exercises (RC 4,1), of the Brother who, in his educational ministry, must inculcate the "spirit of Christianity" into his pupils.

By his life and writings, De La Salle nourishes the prayer and inspires the work of a great many Christian teachers who do not belong to the Institute of which he was the Founder.¹¹ Inspired by his example and teachings, Lasallian schools endeavor to form citizens of the world who are at the same time true Christians (cf. MF 160,3).

¹ *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. III, col. 716f, *Dévotion* by J.W. CURRAN, E. BERTAUD & A. RAYER; *Diccionario de Espiritualidad*, vol. I, p.567.

² *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. XII, col. 307f, article on *Religion (vertu de)*.

³ *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. XII, col. 316, *L'Ecole bérullienne et la vertu de religion*.

⁴ La Salle uses the title of the famous work by NICOLE, a Jansenist author, but treats the subject from a completely opposite viewpoint.

⁵ GALLEGO, S., *Vida y pensamiento de SJBS*, vol. II, *Escritos*, Madrid, B.A.C., 1986.

⁶ GALLEGO, p. 15-23, Cf. note 41 on p. 23; *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. X, article on *Enfance de Jésus*.

⁷ GALLEGO, p.23, note 43. The seal of the Institute at the

time of the Founder and up to 1751 showed St Joseph leading the Child Jesus (cf. CL 13, title page).

⁸ In the Founder's time, the French word *abject* (abased) did not have the modern meaning with its overtones of moral reprobation. It meant rather to be rejected, considered to have no value, cast out, rather like Mary and Joseph when they could find no room in the inn.

⁹ Devotion to St Joseph as Jesus' teacher developed in Rheims, where De La Salle was born, from 1640 onwards under the influence of Adrien Bourdoise. See *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, vol. 34, N° 2, article by Y. Poutet.

¹⁰ In the 17th century, craft confraternities and communities were very numerous, and each had its patron saint and its own devotional practices.

¹¹ *Lasalliana*, N° 17-24, by Br Celestino HERNANDO RUANO; see also *Lasalliana*, 19-1-A-72 & 17-1-A-67; and the *Bulletin of the Institute* of October 5th 1927, p. 76.

Complementary themes

Abandonment	Hearts (To touch)	Penitent
Catechism	Imitation of Christ	Piety
Conduct of the Christian Schools	Love - Charity	Saints
Education	Ministry	Spirit of Christianity
	Mystery	Zeal

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73. DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH

Summary

1. The historical context

2. Saint Joseph in Lasallian writings

2.1. In the "Common Rules" 2.2. In the catechisms 2.3. In the "Meditations".

3. De La Salle's personal devotion to Saint Joseph

3.1. Origin of this devotion 3.2. Manifestation of this devotion 3.3. Motives for such a devotion 3.4. Litanies of St Joseph.

In his last will and testament, De La Salle recommended the Brothers of the Christian Schools to have "a special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin and St Joseph, the patron and protector of their society". This final recommendation is the last of a series of invitations and reminders, frequently repeated over the years, as can be seen from the Founder's writings.

During his lifetime, De La Salle showed a great devotion to St Joseph. Shortly after founding the Institute, he made St Joseph its patron. He recommended his feast to be celebrated solemnly and he introduced the recitation of his litanies.

De La Salle's decision was endorsed by the Bull of Approbation of the new Institute, which says "founded under the protection of the Most Holy Child Jesus and the patronage of St Joseph, the Brothers' chief concern must be to instruct children, especially the poor".

1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Devotion to St Joseph in the Church goes back beyond the 17th century. Its proponents were numerous and varied. Of these we can mention saints such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Bridget, Bernadine of Sienna, Teresa of Avila, Peter of Alcantara and Francis de Sales; and religious congregations such as the Reformed Carmelites, the Dominicans and the Jesuits. In the 15th century, John of Gerson asked the Holy See to extend to the whole Church a devotion that was restricted to certain places; this was done by Pope Sixtus IV. In 1621, Pope Gregory XV made the feast of St Joseph a holyday of obligation, and Clement IX, during the lifetime of the Founder, made it a feast double of the first class.

In 1649, in Paris, a well-known priest, Adrien Bourdoise, founded an "association for prayers to St Joseph to obtain from God, by his intercession, good men and women teachers for working class schools". It was not long before the priests of St Sulpice gave their support to this pious work, which gained a certain popularity.

To help us understand De La Salle's attitude it might be helpful to make two observations: there was quite a large number of Sulpician priests in the association; St Joseph's work of education within the Holy Family was mentioned explicitly. The Founder came under the influence of St Sulpice before devoting himself to the education of the working classes.

In the 17th century France, there were also other zealous devotees of St Joseph, such as St John Eudes, Sister Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament, who had a direct influence on John Eudes, Jean Jacques Olier and Blessed Nicolas Roland, another spiritual influence on De La Salle.

As part of the same reform movement in the Church, a number of secular communities of women

were founded in several dioceses in France. Their members were known as the *Sisters of St Joseph* and they devoted themselves to looking after the poor and to teaching their children catechism. They shared a common spirituality which led them "to see Our Lord in the person of the poor". Several of these congregations have survived and now devote themselves to teaching or missionary work.

2. SAINT JOSEPH IN LASALLIAN WRITINGS

The importance of devotion to St Joseph is implied by the fact that his name is mentioned 120 times in the writings of De La Salle. We shall concentrate in particular on the three works in which he is mentioned most often.

2.1. In the "Common Rules"

Where the name of St Joseph is mentioned in the successive versions of the *Rules* before 1726, it is essentially to remind Brothers of the devotion they were supposed to have to him and of the community practices in his honour. These were directives, therefore, rather than a body of doctrine. However, they indicate the importance attached to the fact that St Joseph was patron of the young Institute.

2.2. In the catechisms

De La Salle devotes instruction XVIII of his third catechism, entitled *Of external and public worship*, to the feast of "St Joseph, spouse of the Most Blessed Virgin" (CL 22,273f = DC 44,18).

In the form of question and answer, the text deals successively with:

- the identity of the saint,
- his poor and hidden lifestyle in Nazareth,
- his principal virtues,
- the difficulties he encountered and the special graces he was given,
- the kind of model he is for us.

One result of the use of a question-and-answer form is that we are given a number of short lists which do not perhaps give us a clear overall idea of Lasallian thinking about St Joseph. The modern — and adult — reader would no doubt prefer a more detailed treatment. As it is, he has to be satisfied with 5 reasons for Joseph's hidden life, 5 virtues he practised, 7 privi-

leges he received from God, 5 types of difficulties he encountered, 6 sorts of consolation and 7 ways of honouring him. That is how the instructions are arranged on the basis of 22 questions.

The material as a whole reflects the piety of the times, which is so different from our own. It is worth noting, however, that the best part of this presentation is based on the albeit few Gospel references to St Joseph.

2.2. In the "Meditations"

The meditation for the feast of St Joseph summarises the thinking of the Founder on this saint who, more than any other, is an example for the Brothers.

The Founder begins by stating that Joseph had all the necessary qualities and virtues to fulfil his sacred ministry of watching over the external actions of Jesus Christ. He was "just", submissive to God and full of solicitude for the Child Jesus.

De La Salle uses St Joseph's justice towards God to establish a parallel with the ministry of the teaching Brother, and to recommend the saint as a model. Like many of his contemporaries, De La Salle highlights St Joseph's educative role regarding the Child Jesus. Do not Brothers have a similar role with regard to children?

The Gospel account of the birth and childhood of Jesus stresses the "complete submission" of St Joseph "to the orders of God". This provides the Founder with a good opportunity to remind the Brothers of the need and excellence of obedience "which, of all the virtues", he says, "is the one most suited to you in your state and employment, and the one which will draw down most graces on you" (MF 110,2).

The third point of the Meditation concentrates on St Joseph's great solicitude for Jesus, especially during the flight into Egypt, the return, the loss in the Temple. Conscious, like the great Patriarch, of the mission he has received from the Father, and inspired by a tender love for Jesus, the Brother must be vigilant in order to preserve the innocence of the children, protect them against "whatever can harm their education", and finally "provide for their needs".

We can see, then, that in his admiration for the saint and the devotion he has for him, De La Salle stresses above all God's call to the ministry and the way it is exercised.

This same ministerial point of view can be seen also in the meditation for the Sunday preceding the Epiphany, which is entitled "The example of Jesus Christ living retired and hidden in Egypt teaches us to love a hidden life" (MD 6).

3. DE LA SALLE'S PERSONAL DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH

3.1. Origin of this devotion

In an article listed in the bibliography, Br Yves Poutet suggests that the Founder's devotion to St Joseph could be explained by the custom in his family to read and listen to the lives of the saints, a practice that was customary in pious families such as his own. These stories always began with the facts of the Scriptural passages before going on to the marvels recorded in the Apochrypha or mediaeval lives of the saints.

Among the saints, whose lives and example the young John Baptist came to know, there were several who had a great devotion to St Joseph. Also, as Canon of the Cathedral of Rheims, he had the opportunity to recite or sing the office of St Joseph, and to listen to office readings taken from the Fathers of the Church. And so, the young De La Salle was not only brought into contact with devotion to St Joseph and its practice, but was also able to assimilate the doctrine on which they were based. His stay in the seminary of St Sulpice in Paris could only have strengthened this devotion.

3.2. Manifestation of this devotion

To discover the full extent of De La Salle's devotion, we would have to examine his life and pick out the instances when it was particularly manifested. However, we are fortunate that Jean Baptiste Blain, the most prolix of his early biographers, has summarised these for us (CL 8,492).

He tells us:

- that the Founder's devotion to St Joseph was as great as his devotion to the angels and St Michael;

- that he showed this devotion by placing his Institute "as soon as it was founded under the protection of this great saint";

- that he constantly sought means to honour him and make him honoured by reciting his litanies daily, in order to live according to the spirit that had inspired him, and by making his feast day "one of the most solemn in the Institute";

- that he added his own example to his constant exhortations. In spite of being very ill, he left his sick bed to celebrate Mass on St Joseph's feast day in 1719, a few weeks before his death;

- that just before his death, he recommended his Brothers to be known for their devotion to St Joseph, "a recommendation he had given them so many times during his lifetime".

3.3. Motives for such a devotion

Blain tells us what the motives were for this special devotion: "What struck him most about the admirable life of the holy spouse of the Mother of God was his great docility regarding the guidance of divine Providence, his submission to the most disagreeable orders, his prompt obedience to the voice of the Lord, his hidden life, his angelical chastity, and finally his tenderness and love for Jesus and Mary. These were virtues in which he was determined to imitate this great saint" (CL 8,492).

Those who are familiar with the life and writings of De La Salle will have immediately recognised in these words an echo of innumerable other passages and events in the life of the Founder. His conviction must indeed have been very great, because Blain adds that "he was a living image of St Joseph".

3.4. The litanies of St Joseph

Blain goes on to say: "To satisfy his devotion to this great saint, he composed in his honour a long litany taken from Holy Scripture, which expresses unctuously the feelings of tenderness, affection and zeal which he had for this just man par excellence".

The *Common Rules* prescribed: "At one o'clock, the Brothers will gather in the oratory to recite the litany of St Joseph, patron and protector of the community, to ask for his spirit and help for the Christian education of children" (RC 27,22).

What litany was this ? Blain does not tell us where the litany De La Salle recited comes from (CL 8,492). One cannot say, therefore, that it was the same one mentioned later which is expressly attributed to him. There existed at the time various litanies of St Joseph which were used by communities and individuals in their prayer. The article by Y. Poutet already referred to tries to throw some light on the question. One thing is certain: the Founder was so filled with devotion to St Joseph that he composed a litany in his honour in order to express the feelings that his example aroused in him.

The place given to St Joseph in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools from its origins has survived over the centuries. Practices of piety in his honour are still performed, his feast continues to be celebrated with great solemnity, and innumerable educational establishments and communities all over the world continue to be placed under his protection. In this long tradition of devotion, we can single out the foundation in the 19th century of the Confraternity —soon to be Arch confraternity— of St Joseph, whose principal aim was to promote devotion to this saint in the Church. Its influence soon spread beyond the confines of the Institute.

Today, in addition to "Joseph the educator" of the 17th century, we venerate also Joseph the craftsman, patron of workers, now honoured by a special feast. The piety of the Brothers, however, remains attached to St Joseph for having "participated in the work of salvation by providing for the upbringing and education of Jesus" and having been "faithful to death in his humble role as foster father" as the Rule has stated since 1967.

Complementary themes

Guardian angels

Devotion

Marian Devotion

Saints

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74. DIRECTOR

Summary

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1. SEMANTIC CONTEXT OF THE WORD "DIRECTOR"

The word "director" belongs to the traditional language of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. If, on the other hand, we look at religious congregations as a whole, we find that its use is rare. "Director" is a term rarely used in religious life to describe the superior of a community, even though it is generally accepted as a term designating the person in charge of a group.

1.1. "Director" and "superior" in Lasallian texts

De La Salle uses the term "director" either to refer to the Brother who is in charge of a school, or to describe the same person in his role as head of a community of Brothers of the Christian Schools. In both cases, delegated authority is involved: it is exercised dependently on the Brother Superior of the Institute. "The name Director has been given to the Brother Director of each house of the Institute to make him realise that his chief concern must be to direct, under

the guidance and authority of the Brother Superior of the Institute, all that concerns his house and the schools which depend on it" (CL 25,154 = FD 1,2).

The *Lasallian Vocabulary* (Paris, 1984, vol. II) makes a distinction between "Director" — the superior of a local Brothers' community — and "Brother Director", who is either the head of the school (CL 25,158 = FD 1,36-37), or the superior of the local Brothers' community¹ (cf. CL 8,145f).

As regards the term "superior", apart from some exceptions,² it refers to either the Superior General of the Institute, always called "Brother Superior", especially in legislative texts (RC & FD), or the superior of a local community, and then it is synonymous with director.

There should be no problem regarding these terms, since we have seen that the head of a school is never called a superior, and that the expressions "the superiors" or "your superiors" seem to include all those who

have authority over the Brothers in the context of their regular and community life (and not directly in that of the school).

It is clear from our examination of the *Lasallian Vocabulary* that the semantic context of "director" is very restricted. De La Salle seems to have wanted to distance himself from ecclesiastical and conventional vocabulary. "Director" and "superior" are not antithetical terms: they both refer to the same set of functions in the Brothers' community³. "Director" is a term that is more specifically Lasallian: it is a term that has been traditional throughout the history of the Institute.

1.2. "Superior" in the Trévoux dictionary

The Trévoux dictionary (1719) defines the adjective as follows: "He who is placed above others, who has the right to command them. [...] Society is so ordered that inferiors are submissive and obedient to their Superiors". It says of the noun: "Is used also to describe the person who has authority in a community [...] The abbot is called the superior of an abbey; the prior, of a convent. [...] Means also elevated, a person who has a rank, a prerogative, or some other advantage that puts him above others, such as rank, intelligence, power". The 1771 edition includes a quotation from Bourdaloue: "What is a Superior in a religious community? He is the guardian and protector of the rule, which, because of a special and specific duty, he must support, endorse, defend and avenge".

1.3. In contemporary usage

A recent theological dictionary of the consecrated life⁴ recalls the etymology of the word "superior":

"A person in a human group who rises above the others, either by his innate qualities (natural superiority), or by his position (juridical, economic or political), which confers on him a certain prestige". In human societies, and by a process of antonomasia, the superior is "the one who occupies in them an eminent position serving as a principle of unity, order, authentication of membership, coordination of action, etc. [...] By derivation, in our context, the religious superior is the person in a community of consecrated Brothers who occupies a preeminent position of power and authority, [...] In civil society, and even more in religious society, when we use the term superior, we always have in mind his term of reference: the community. So much so, that where there is no community there is no appointed superior".⁵

If we replace "superior" by "director" in the last sentence, we return to the categories of Lasallian language. What we have is a group of terms, arranged in pairs, which are related:

- superior or director *and* community
- obedience *and* authority
- superior or director *and* will of God.

Of these terms, two can be synonymous, as explained earlier, i.e. superior and director.⁶

2. JUSTIFICATION AND SCOPE OF THE PRESENT ARTICLE

This article does not deal with the role of Brother Directors in the mission of the Institute. Instead, it concentrates on the internal functioning of the religious community, where the Brothers lead their lives under the authority of their community Brother Director.⁷

The separation here of the functions of the Brother Director of the school from those of the Brother Director of the community may seem surprising. For De La Salle these two responsibilities were inseparable, to the extent that there is absolutely nothing in his writings that even hints at the dissociation of these two functions which, in our days, not infrequently are exercised by two different persons. What has not

changed is that community and mission are still inseparably united. What is exterior nourishes what is interior; what is interior gives an identity to what is exterior. The community does not exist for its own sake, but for a purpose.

Our choice of subject is inspired by the importance De La Salle attached to the role of Brother Directors, as guarantors of the vitality and survival of his Institute, as Blain tells us in his biography: "The holy priest often said that the Institute was in the hands of the Brother Directors; that it was they who worked for its destruction or its establishment; that its regularity reflected their own; and that fervour in it would be maintained only by their fidelity to the rule and

their duties" (CL 8,145). This expression, the quintessence of his thinking and the fruit of his experience, is as relevant to the school as it is to the community.

Modern psycho-sociology sees in the well-regulated exercise of authority-power — here, of the Brother Director — a major factor in bringing about social change — or in our case, the conversion of the community. Modifying group attitudes or bringing about institutional changes calls for a new way of exercising authority in the situation one wants to change.⁸

This secular language fits in well with our subject. The Brother Director—authority-power — is the point of reference for the development of the community. He is the guarantor of all renewal in a community.

Our study of De La Salle's thinking on the Brother Director, based on historical documents, is valuable only as a preliminary step, because, as Brothers living today, we must embody the dynamism we have received from the Founder. Today, as in every period of its history, the Brothers' Institute must rethink what it understands by community.⁹

3. THE GREAT ESTEEM OF J. B. DE LA SALLE FOR THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR, AS REPORTED BY HIS BIOGRAPHERS

"In its basic thinking, the teaching of De La Salle betrays his experience".¹⁰ This is why, before analysing his writings, it is worth glancing at his biography.

De La Salle was beyond question the leader of the group of Brothers he had founded. This probably led him to attach importance to the role of Brother Directors. His biographers speak of the difficulties he had in establishing himself as leader, and of the qualities that enabled him to succeed.

According to Maillefer, he was "sensitive and accessible". He paid heed to the needs of his neighbour (CL 6,35). His "sense of observation" and of responsibility gradually brought him closer to the persons whom initially he considered "inferior to his valet" (CL 7,169). He invited them "to eat at his own table" despite the difference in social rank, and then he left his home to live with them in a more modest house. The wearing of an identical habit strengthened the **group-identity** of the Brothers. The union in which the Brothers lived was matched by the personal **detachment** of the Founder who several times resigned as superior or was removed from this position by order of the bishop. Except when his life was drawing to an end, **the Brothers insisted that he be responsible** for the government of the community, and refused all attempts to impose an outsider as superior. The letter of April 1st 1714 shows that the Brothers recognised that God gave him "the grace and qualities necessary to govern this new company" well and acknowledged that he had "always directed it with much success and edification". That is why, they write,

it is of the utmost importance that he take up again "the care and overall direction of the Society". This recognition by the Brothers of the qualities of their "very dear father" as a superior was the fruit of years of community life (CL 6,227).

J.B. Blain provides us with plenty of practical details regarding the role of directors. When he speaks of the *Rule of the Brother Director* (CL 8,145f), he picks out in particular the obligations indicated in it:

- "Watch over the Brothers who are his inferiors,
- preside over the exercises,"
- take care of internal and external business,
- render an account of everything to the Brother Superior whose vicar he is in a way".

"What is good and what is bad in the Institute depends on their good or bad conduct. They are second in command, and each has a part of the flock to lead. [...] After studying for a long time the causes of the decline of the monasteries, M. de La Salle believed the fault lay with the Superiors" and their negligence or compromises. In the same way, the regularity of the Brother Director is the guarantee of the fervour of his community.

Around 1700, the Founder composed a rule for the Brother Directors. They were supposed to use it for their spiritual reading twice a week, and have it read once a month in the refectory. According to Blain, De La Salle came up against resistance from a number of Directors on this last point (CL 8,146). This gives us an insight into their mentality.

Inferiors, knowing the obligations of their Director, could find in them a source of edification and be

stimulated to vie with him in the observance of their own; words were translated into action. As a witness and, at the same time, a judge of his Director, the inferior rendered him the same service that the Director owed him. The public reading of this rule could serve as an endorsement of the Brother Director's conduct or as a public demonstration of his shortcomings. There were some proud Brother Directors who could not cope with this public judgment, while others, who were humble and obedient, were happy to accept the authority of this text and, following its directives, preached by example. If the Brother Director's posi-

tion in the community was that of an elder brother in a family, then it was his duty to offer his younger Brothers the example of his obedience to his father. If a Brother Director considered these obligations humiliating, then he was not sufficiently humble and obedient. It was a proof that he did not fulfil them, for the public reading of the text was a source of praise for those who did so.

To overcome this resistance, De La Salle asked the Brother Directors to draw up their own rule, in this way, making them their own lawgivers (CL 8,147).

4. THE BROTHER DIRECTOR IN THE FIRST LEGISLATIVE LASALLIAN TEXTS¹²

4.1. The "Rule of the Brother Director"

We do not have a copy of this text, and we know of its existence only through Blain. However, following the chapter of 1717, the newly elected Superior General, Brother Barthelémy, sent to each community a manuscript copy of a legislative text entitled: *Rule of the Brother Director of a house of the Institute*.¹³ (CL 25,154f= FD).

This document, which goes back to the time of the Founder, took the form of a list of obligations to be followed by the Director, maintaining him under the strict control of the Superior of the Institute. The Director is required to show hardly any creativity. The modern reader is given the impression that the Brother Directors of the beginning of the 18th century had very little experience when they took up their position. They needed clear and precise guidelines whose implementation called only for strict obedience.

This relatively short *Rule* (79 articles) opens with a triple declaration of principle:

- The Brother Director of a house is not called "Superior" but "Director".
- His function is "to direct, under the guidance and authority of the Brother Superior of the Institute, all that concerns his house and the schools which depend on it, and to direct interiorly the Brothers who are in his charge, and make them advance in virtue [...] by directing their conscience".
- He must be "dependent on the Brother Superior of

the Institute, not doing anything [...] except through submission to him".

The text goes on to describe in detail the behaviour the Brother Director must adopt, recalling several times the importance of dependence on the Superior General, and the fact that he must be informed more or less about everything. The Director must not give any orders independently. If he has advisers, they are appointed by the Superior. He cannot give any special permissions. Once a month, he gives an account of the permissions he has given. He does not introduce any practice into the house without the written order of the Superior (CL 25,154 = FD 1,3-6).

He reports periodically to the Brother Superior regarding the schools and the conduct of each Brother (CL 25,157f = FD 33 & 37). For information regarding the past of the Brothers in his charge, he refers to no one else except Brother Superior (CL 25,155 = FD 13). He needs his permission to go and visit his family, and even a written order to leave the town (CL 25,156 = FD 16 & 17). "When the Brother Director commits a serious fault, he asks the Brother Superior of the Institute for a penance" (CL 25,156 = FD 20).

In administrative matters, the Director must keep an eye on school matters (CL 25,158 = FD 36f) as well as on the expenses of the house (CL 25,158f = FD 42f). He cannot incur debts nor undertake exceptional expenditure without permission (CL 25,159 = FD 45f). Periodically, he must present a report on the behav-

iour of each of the Brothers, including himself, and submit to the Brother Superior his plans for allocating work to the Brothers in the school. At the end of the year, he must report on how each Brother has done his work (CL 25,158 = FD 33f). He does not write without permission. Regarding the community house, the *Rule of the Brother Director* lays down detailed instructions concerning sweeping, extinguishing candles, bolting the doors, collecting the keys and, every Sunday after Mass, visiting all the rooms of the house (CL25,159f = FD51f).

There is also a more positive side to the text. For example, when an urgent decision has to be taken, the Brother Director must not put it off: instead, he must examine it "for half a quarter of an hour, on his knees, in the presence of God, to see if it is of this nature" (i.e. urgent). Then "he will consult the Brother or Brothers given him by the Brother Superior of the Institute to advise him" (CL 25,154 = FD 4). In his apostolate, he will show "affection and a special tenderness of heart for all the Brothers who are in his charge [...]; his chief concern regarding the Brothers will be to establish and maintain them in a true spirit of faith" (CL25,156f=FD21f).

4.2. Two other old Lasallian texts

In 1986, Br Saturnine Gallego published a volume of De La Salle's writings in a Spanish translation. In it, he speaks of the existence of two documents in the archives of the Brothers' Generalate, entitled: "Qualities which Brother Directors of houses of the Institute must have in order to acquit themselves well of their duties" (4 pages) and "M. de La Salle's advice to Brother Directors, religious¹⁴ of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools" (8 pages). He does not quote from either document.

There are doubts about the authenticity of these texts which could be simply compilations produced after the death of the Founder. The ideas and often the style are reminiscent of the *Rule of the Brother Director*, passages from letters and meditations, and statements attributed to De La Salle by Blain. We should consider these texts, therefore, as witnesses of a past age to Lasallian tradition. They tell us that the generation which took over on the death of the Founder (1719) and that of the first Superior (1720) attached a great deal of importance to the function of director in the accomplishment of the mission of the Institute.

4.2.1. "QUALITIES WHICH BROTHER DIRECTORS MUST HAVE" ¹⁵

A Director must be convinced that his work is important for the good of the Society (1) and that he will have to account for any Brother he allows to become lost through his negligence. When inferiors open their conscience to him, he will be prudent and respect secrecy (introduction, 10, 11).

He is expected to have high **moral qualities**: a lively and ardent faith (1) and much humility. He must abandon himself into the hands of God who helps him to lead others (1-3). He must be gentle and calm (6), discreet, prudent and simple (6-8). He is willing to bear with patience the defects of his inferiors (9), and he is affable and docile in his words and in his behaviour. With persons of the world, he is modest and circumspect (12-13). His piety and modesty lead him to speak to his Brothers only for the good of their soul (14) and to keep his mind attentive to the voice of God (15). He must show great care and vigilance in looking after the house, but even more so where he himself is concerned, making sure he remains constantly united to God (18).

4.2.2. "ADVICE [...] TO BROTHER DIRECTORS"

There is no change in tone, but there are some new elements. The Brother Director must be vigilant over himself so as not to give scandal (I,III; V,I; V,III = 11-12) nor reveal anything to outsiders about the life of the community (II,III = 22). If he differs from his Brothers, it must be by his piety and regularity (I,IV; V,II = 14). He should not be fastidious at table and he should ensure that the Brothers are not either (III,XII; V,I = 15). He should speak little and after reflection (III,VIII; V,I = 10) and not have recourse to threats (IV,VI = 44).

In his **pastoral care of the Brothers**, he ensures in particular that there is an atmosphere of silence in the house. At any given time, he must know what the Brothers are doing, where they are if they are not in community or in school (II,VII; III,III = 38). He shows particular concern for the young Brothers and the sick (II,VII = 42). He makes sure the Brothers receive communion in accordance with the rule. He is careful to ensure that those who do not fulfil the conditions of age do not fast (IV,III = 51).

In **the administration of the house**, he keeps an eye on the bursar, cook, gardener, etc, without, however, exercising any of these functions himself.

As we can see, these two documents do not contradict the *Rule of the Brother Director*, but neither do they repeat what it says. The text of the Rule (1718) explains in a somewhat juridical style the duties of the Director, of which one of the principal ones is subordination to the Centre of the Institute. The other documents, which are not dated, are first of all practical in nature: they give a glimpse of the Brothers' everyday life in community. And then, instead of stressing dependence on superior authority, these documents reveal an overall concern to look after the local community, by promoting a climate of piety, work, regularity, as well as fraternal life around a director who, instead of being distant, is affable.

These texts were printed and distributed around 1745 (CL 25,7). In 1814, the two texts were amalgamated under the title: "Advice of M. Jean Baptiste de La Salle to the Brother Directors of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools" and incorporated in the *Rule of Government* following chapter XIII which was entitled "On the qualities that Brothers Directors of houses of the Institute should have". In 1947, this material was taken out of the Rule of Government, but the second text was included in the form of a foreword with the title "Advice of St John Baptist de La Salle to Brothers in charge". The long life of this document was an indication of the extent to which it fulfilled expectations in the Institute.

5. BROTHER DIRECTOR IN THE "COMMON RULES" OF 1718

Written for all the Brothers, superiors and inferiors, the 32 chapters of this text contain both a "rule of life" for the Brothers and regulations, timetables and calendars for the administration of the Institute. There are no specific sections intended for Directors, but among the directives governing the daily life of the Institute, there is a partial description of their role. The word "director" is used 107 times. The "Brother Director" is shown as an "active subject" — having duties towards his inferiors and the Superior General — and as a "passive subject" — the inferiors having duties towards him.

5.1. Director-inferior relations

The first commandment of the Institute, "You will honour God in your superior and obey him promptly" (RC 16,8; cf. 12,3; 12,9-10; 20,2), expresses the strict dependence that ought to exist between each Brother and his Director, and the marks of exterior respect that this entails (RC 6,4; 12,4; 12,5-7; 12,11-13; 15,13).

The Brother sees in his Director a guide to lead him along the path to perfection (RC 4,5; 5,8). In his presence he is told of his faults (RC 5,9). Each week, he gives him an account of his conduct (RC 5,14) with complete confidence (RC 12,8), accepting his advice as coming from God (RC 12,9-10). The somewhat restrictive climate in the community protects the group and makes it easier to govern: all mail passes through the hands of the Brother Director (RC 25,3-5); his permission guarantees that Brothers do God's will (RC 20,8), whether this involves speaking to a fellow

Brother (RC 13,10) or leaving the house (RC 13,15). When a Brother travels his route is decided by the Brother Director (RC 24,1).

In the case of conflict or simply difference of opinion, there is provision for an appeal. Since each Brother had to write regularly to the Brother Superior, he had an opportunity to express his wishes and even ask to change community (RC 25,4). The letters to Brother Mathias are a good example of this procedure (LA 42-51 = English transl. 55-64).

Such close dependence may be thought to have been exasperating and damaging for inferiors. However, we have to remember that the Director had some serious obligations towards his Brothers.

5.2. Specific obligations of the Brother Director

The Brother Director had two important functions. He was the guardian of regularity and he had a pastoral role.

By the **pastoral role** of the Director we mean that he has to induce his little flock to imitate Jesus Christ, since he is responsible for the spiritual progress of each Brother. He observes the exterior behaviour of his Brothers, punishes their faults (RC 4,4; 5,7-8), authorises them to go to communion in certain cases (RC 4,5), takes appropriate measures if something inappropriate is said in community (RC 13,8), keeps a check on correspondence (RC 7,19; 25,5) and on visits, especially if a woman comes to the parlour (RC 14,5 & 6). He renders an account of everything to the

Superior of the Institute (RC 25,1).

As **guardian of the Rule**,¹⁶ the Brother Director has to preside over all the exercises, a term which has to be understood in its broadest sense, that is, meaning all the activities in which the group participated (see note. 11). In practice, the Director had to ensure the observance of the timetable indicated in such great detail in the Rule which, however, invited him to alter it if necessary: "What cannot be done before Holy Mass will be done after" (CL 25,131 = RC 30,20,44).

Often there were young Brothers in the community whose novitiate had lasted only a few months. Some of these could be "unrefined, simple and without much schooling, who normally behaved on the basis of their impressions" (MH 36). The Director together, with the older Brothers, had a teaching role in their regard, as is clear from the Rule. An example of this is the "Accusation", a daily exercise which took place "before supper in the oratory". The Brothers would accuse themselves, each in turn and aloud, of some fault against the rule or fraternal charity committed during the day. The Director would give them a penance "to do immediately or at some other time

[...] according to what was indicated in the Collection of Penances. The Brother Director could, however, give them heavier penances depending on the needs of the Brothers and the seriousness of their faults" (RC 5,71).

Likewise it was the duty of the Director to ensure that the "great silence" was observed in the dormitory, even in his absence (RC 3,1); it was his duty to reprimand Brothers who said something inappropriate (RC 6,12), and he alone could authorise a Brother to eat outside of the fixed mealtimes (RC 3,2). During recreations, he called upon Brothers to speak (RC 6,4), and he controlled the outings and journeys of the Brothers (RC 13,15; 24,1), etc.

These prescriptions were presented in a spiritual context. Like the Benedictine Abbot, the Director is the representative of God in this cell of the Church, the Lasallian community¹⁷: "They will speak to the Brother Director only with great respect, always in a low voice and in terms that show the great veneration they have for him as holding the place of God, whom they must recognise and respect in the person of their Director" (RC 12,6).

6. BROTHER DIRECTORS IN THE LETTERS OF J.B. DE LA SALLE

When De La Salle writes to a Brother Director he does not distinguish between the Director's conduct and that of his Brothers, nor between the running of the community and that of the school.

What is immediately clear is that the Director does not have to do everything himself. Catering, for example, with its need to leave the house to go shopping, is the work of the serving Brother: "If a Brother Director becomes too concerned about day-to-day affairs, his whole community suffers; [...] Your exercises and your schools require all your care. If you involve yourself in anything else, you are acting in opposition to the designs of God. [...] There are not two masters in the house, for in all religious communities there is one person who is in charge of spiritual matters and another of domestic arrangements" (LC 38,2-5 & 25, to Br Hubert, Oct. 2nd 1710). One feels that this sharing of responsibilities did not always work too well, given the mentality of the times, the social background of the Brothers and habits adopted before the arrival of the serving Brothers.

De La Salle urges several of his correspondents, all inferiors, not to speak too freely to their Brother Director, but to adore God in his person (LC 97,6; LI 87,10). He recommends them to speak to the Director of their worries: God will bless them for doing so (LA 33,4; 44,6; LC 102,3). In this connection, the Director must give proof of great equability, as one of De La Salle's letters to a Director says with a certain amount of humour: "A Director must have such great patience and such solid virtue that he should look upon himself as a receptacle for all the refuse of the house, that is, that he must be prepared to put up with everything without showing pain or displeasure" (LI 79,1). Another Director is reproached for being as cheerful as a prison door (LI 80,1).

However, putting up with everything does not mean allowing everything: "Often pray that your community may be faithful to the Rule, and for your Brothers when they don't do as they ought, or when they are troubled; and ask of God the understanding you need

for your guidance on these occasions" (LA 35,17). This means accepting to reprimand the Brothers, not always a pleasant task: "You must not get upset about having to reprimand your Brothers. You are only doing your duty. [...] So you are ready to let the Brothers lose their vocations because you are not coura-

geous enough to reprimand them?". (LC 38,9 & 17), Reprimands should be given without any bad feelings, however: "We must love our Brothers in order to correct them with gentleness and affection, for otherwise a reprimand will not normally bear fruit" (LI 71,3).

7. "DIRECTOR" AND "SUPERIOR" IN LASALLIAN MEDITATIONS

The terms "superior" and "director" are used by De La Salle in his meditations for Sundays, both in the series of meditations on obedience (MD 7-15) and in various others¹⁸ (MD 19, 21, 72, 73, 75, 76). The term "Brother Director" does not occur a single time. The Brother who is worried is invited to show "the wounds of his soul to his spiritual physician", that is to say, "to make them known to his Director" (MD 19,1). In the rest of the meditation "Director" is replaced by "Superior".

The word "Director" is used twice in the plural (MD 71 and 99). Speaking of the cure of spiritual paralysis, De La Salle writes: "Above all, open your heart completely to your Directors" (MD 71,3). Elsewhere, if God inspires you with his interior light to perform some good action, "he wills that you should have recourse to your Directors and Superiors, to whom he is careful to make known what is expected of you, and whom he has appointed to direct you" (MF 99,3). In fact, as "the interior light of God is not sufficient to conduct you safely to him, you stand in need of a guide who will direct you in a visible man-

ner" (MF 91,1). It is the responsibility of superiors, therefore, to discern and, if necessary, demand obedience (MD 13,3).

Some wonder why. "He is only a Brother like myself! This is true, but he is commissioned by God to assist you in attaining salvation" (MD 72,3). The ultimate authority where obedience is concerned is not the personal qualities of the director, the spiritual guide of his Brothers, but the word of Christ to the Church: "Anyone who listens to you listens to me" (Lk 10,16, quoted in MD 7,1 & 21,1). In this way, obedience becomes one of the most eminent acts of religion, directed to "God hidden under the form of a weak and mortal man, but vested with divine authority" (MD 9,1).

To fulfil his duties well, the Superior must "not be annoyed at the remarks that are made", "watch over his conduct so as to do nothing that might give bad example, or that might be contrary to the duties of his position". He should have "no special affection for anyone", and "strive to be a model to all by his piety and regularity" (MD 75,1).

8. CONCLUSION: THE INSTITUTE "IN THE HANDS OF THE BROTHER DIRECTORS" (CL 8,145)

In section 2, paragraph 3, of the present article we quoted the exhortation Blain attributes to the Founder regarding the important role of Brother Directors in maintaining the founding spirit of the Institute. Even if these are not the exact words used by De La Salle, they reflect accurately enough his teachings on community, the sphere of the Brothers' life and apostolate, and on the important role given to Brother Directors by the *Rule* in the daily life of the Institute.¹⁹

To adapt these words to our present situation would

involve the redefinition of how our communities function, their external apostolic commitments, and their attitude towards power. Community, as De La Salle conceived it, does not correspond to the way in which the Lasallian charism can be embodied in our time, and this, of course, has a bearing on the function of the Brother Director in a community. Often we find it useful to return to our sources before deciding to go out and take up the struggle again to promote God's Kingdom. We always find inspiration but never any

ready-made answers. Let us pick out some of the things required of the Brother Director of a community:²⁰

1. The quality of his presence in the community, as a passive presence ("being" available to his Brothers), and as an active presence ("attentive" to their needs).
2. Personal attention given to each Brother in the community. All must be the object of his concern, especially young Brothers and the sick.
3. Provide new facilities and opportunities in community to encourage creativity and personal relations, including rooms which can help the community to affirm its identity, and the Brothers to develop as persons.
4. Accept plurality of behaviour and diversity of expression. This becomes possible when a strong link with the Brother Director, the guarantor of unity in the community, takes the place of the former bonds resulting from uniform behaviour.
5. Borrow from the teachings of the Founder anything that can infuse new energy into the animation of the community and strengthen the function of the Director of a house of the Institute.

For example, from the *Collection*: - giving an account of one's conduct (R 8)

- the 1st commandment of the Institute (R 3)
- the 4 external supports (R 4,2)
- the 9 qualities of obedience (R 9)
- the considerations Brothers should make from time to time (R 16)

In the same way, study the letters of the Founder, especially LI 65-81. Read the first biographers, bearing in mind the present-day work of a Director inspired by the spirit of De La Salle.

6. Nowadays, when the desire for personal independence is so strong among Brothers who work that it can compromise the idea of working "together and by association", the Brother Director needs special support which makes possible both his role as coordinator and his relations with the District leadership and the Centre of the Institute.
7. Ask each Brother Director to stand back a little from his job, and, in the presence of God, reflect quietly about the specific mission he has.
8. Prepare Brothers to become Directors of communities. Ask current Directors to speak of their duties. Young Brothers react positively to this kind of thing.

Seen in this way, the duties of the Director of a community can be enriching both for the one who fulfils them and for those of whom he has charge, in the common pursuit of the aims of the Institute.

¹ Without wishing to draw any conclusions, we note that in the *Conduct of Schools*, the term always used (about 50 times) is "Brother Director", and not "Director", while the opposite is true of the *Meditations* (MD 19,1,1 & 71,3,2; MF 99,3,2).

² Not included are the few cases where ecclesiastical superiors are mentioned or, in RB, high ranking members of society.

³ Although only "Director" or "Brother Director" refer to the school context.

⁴ *Diccionario Teologico de la Vida Consagrada*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid, 1989, p. 1691.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 1692.

⁶ See 1982 French edition of the *Meditations* of SJBS, the word "obedience" in the subject index.

⁷ The *Lasallian Themes* series deals with the role of the Brother Director in the school context in an article on the "School" by Br L. Lauraire in the present volume.

⁸ Cf. Mailhot B., *Dinámica y Génesis de Grupo*, Madrid, Marova, 2nd edit., 1973, p. 59.

⁹ Reference texts are plentiful for this task: the 1987 *Rule*, the documents of the 41st General Chapter, and several pastoral letters of Br Superior (1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992).

¹⁰ *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. VIII, p. 809, article by A. Hermans and M. Sauvage, 1974.

¹¹ In addition to "community exercises", there are "school exercises": R 10,2,26 speaks of "laxity in the exercises of the house and of the school" (cf. MF 92,3,1; LC 98,6; CE 18,6 & 21,2,5). Many of the "daily exercises" (RC 27) of the community refer to school — reading, writing and arithmetic (9 & 10) — or are connected with it: reading from the school rules (11), litanies of the Child Jesus and St Joseph (16 & 22). The special exercises for Sundays and feasts (RC 28) include the catechism taught to the pupils (7) and the catechism of formation (19).

¹² The *Collection* (R) and the *Directories* included as appendices (RD) describe to a certain extent the relations between the Brother and his Director.

- The vows oblige the Brother to obey the particular Directors given by the Brother Superior (R 2,4). The person obeying must be totally indifferent and be prepared to obey without discernment (ie. without judgment) (R 8,2,8; RD 1,11), wishing only to obey God (R 9,2,1; 15,2,5).

- The Brother must render an account to the Brother Superior whether he has esteem and affection for his Director and whether he has always obeyed him (RD 1,12).

- In reddition, it is God who speaks through the mouth of the Director responsible for my conduct (R 8,1,3); he teaches me what I must do, consoles me in my sufferings, points out my defects and reprimands me (*id.* 5), whether they refer to the school or community (R 8,2,20-21).

- Let us note finally that the "Opening of one's conscience to one's Superior or Director", listed in the "Means the Brothers may use to become interior" (R 13,2), is not developed subsequently in the text.

¹³ It is likely that the 1718 *Rule of the Brother Director* was a copy of a previously produced text, and included changes asked for by the 1717 Chapter, even though this is not mentioned by the biographers.

¹⁴ The use of the word "religious" with reference to the Brothers seems to imply that the title at least of the document was drawn up after the Bull of Approbation was obtained (1726).

¹⁵ In section 4,2,1, the references refer to a document kept in the Generalate archives (N° X BO 776-1). In section 4,2,2, the references in Roman figures refer to the document kept in the Generalate archives (same document number) and those in Arabic figures to the 1947 *Rule of Government*, p. V onwards.

¹⁶ This expression, although traditional, is not part of either De La Salle's or Blain's vocabulary.

¹⁷ The words are more risky than it seems and can be understood only in reference to a humble and hidden God. Brother Directors had very little human prestige, as the Founder had been obliged, in spite of not wanting to (CL 8,55; cf. LA 37,6), to increase the number of communities serving schools with only 2 classes (8 out of 22), and consisting therefore of only 2 Brothers (or 3, if there was a serving Brother). In 1717, the young Institute numbered only 7 houses with 5 or more Brothers.

¹⁸ In several of these meditations, the Superior is shown as a spiritual guide and not at all as the Director of the community or a Superior of the Institute. One is led to wonder whether, in its first printing, the text was intended for the FSC or for persons living in community in general. However, since the Lasallian Brother Director is also a spiritual guide for his inferiors, the texts were able to apply to Brothers just as easily.

¹⁹ De La Salle was able to see how important the role of a Director was after a number of unfortunate experiences: Directors who were too hard on their inferiors or lacked tact, in 1690 in Rheims (CL 7,311), or in Paris, in 1702 (CL 6,140; CL 7,404). There were Directors who left the Institute and their schools were harmed: in 1705 (Nicolas Vuyart in Paris), in 1713-14 (Ponce in Avignon, Henri in Mende).

²⁰ Given the international character of the Institute, it would take a great deal of space to describe the evolved role of the present-day Brother Director of a community in the pursuit of the community's specific mission; and what his position is in relation to that of the headmaster (possibly a lay person) of a school. See the report on the seminar given by Br Jorge Bonilla ("Construir la comunidad") during the SIEL session, February-March 1989 (CIL secretariat, Rome).

Complementary themes

Brothers	Conduct of the Christian Schools	Ministry
Community, Society, Institute	Formation	Religious School

Br Jorge BONILLA SORT DE SANZ and Br Alain HOURY

75. DUTY, OBLIGATION

Summary

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1. A WORD ABOUT SEMANTICS

1.1. Frequency of the use of the verb "devoir" (to have to, must)

The verb *devoir* is mentioned 3,219 times in the *Lasallian Vocabulary*. From the point of view of frequency, it occupies 5th place. As a verb, it occupies 4th place after "to be", "to do" and "to have". As a verb of action, it occupies 2nd place.

It is noticeable that often in a sentence it is only the verb *devoir* that expresses obligation.¹

1.2. Frequency of use of the noun "devoir" (duty)

As a noun *devoir* is used 318 times in 16 out of the 20 writings covered by the *Lasallian Vocabulary*. It appears 150 times in the catechetical works, and 136 times in the writings intended more specifically for the Brothers.

1.3. The noun "devoir" is often specified

A duty or duties can be prescribed for persons: Christians (37 times), married couples, servants, pastors, faithful, fathers and mothers, schoolchildren, teachers, etc. All these are different "states" (see § 5). These may be permanent or temporary, and the terms used define relationships between different situations. The duty of state will be dealt with later.

They may be prescribed also for situations. In this case, duty or duties of "one's state" are referred to (16 times), or of one's profession, marital state, of our responsibility, of your employment, of religion, of a ministry, etc. Here also duties of state may be involved.

The use of duty is sometimes precise, as in the case of Easter communion, or more general, as "in with regard to God", or "daily", or "in school", etc. Of the 99 examples of its use, 26 refer to teachers or Brothers, and 50 to pupils or seculars.

Devoir (duty) can be specified also by the use of a verb. De La Salle speaks of the duty of praying, thanking, offering, loving, adoring, knowing, teaching, learning, taking the place, taking up again, sharing in someone's zeal, being watchful, giving a blessing, greeting, defending oneself, stopping... Of the 16 instances of this use, 7 refer to personal behaviour and 9 to attitudes towards others.

The noun *devoir* (duty) has many meanings, as can be seen from the following expressions: *se mettre en devoir de* (to set about doing something), *rendre ses devoirs a* (pay one's respects to), *avoir le devoir de* (to have a duty to), *faire son devoir* (to do one's duty), *il est du devoir de* (it is the duty of). It can also be preceded by such verbs as "to acquit oneself (67 times), fulfil (7 times), do (*faire*), satisfy, to attach oneself to, pay (*rendre*) (76 times), or by expressions such as *il est de votre* (it is your) (31 times), *c'est votre* (it is your) (21 times) or the equivalent. There is also the verb *manquer a* (to fail in) and others with a similar meaning (12 times).

All these verbs indicate the need "to do" one's duty. They are used in an imperative sense, which is often strengthened by the use of the verb *falloir* (to have to, must) and the adverb *bien* (well, very). In this context there are few negative verbs. There is no doubt that, for De La Salle, to acquit oneself well of one's duty, is an imperative obligation.²

1.4. Duty and obligation defined in 18th century dictionaries

What was the meaning of the words "duty" and "obligation" at the time of the Founder? The *Dictionnaire Universel* printed in Trévoux in 1721 defines the noun *duty* as follows: "The obligation one has to say or do something, either because one is obliged to do so by the law, or by necessity, or by decency or propriety". The writer does not define the kind of law he is referring to, and his definition seems to equate duty and obligation, although the latter term is seen as being a little more abstract in character, while duty is seen as being more concrete (to say or do something).

The same work defines obligation as follows: "What constrains a person to do something, such as duty, necessity, the law, precept [...]. Bond which induces someone to do something".

Another edition of this dictionary, dated 1771, adds the following shade of meaning: "Duty [...] refers more to conscience; it has to do with law; virtue induces us to acquit ourselves of it. Obligation refers more directly to practice; it has to do with usage. One is lacking in one's duty, but one dispenses oneself from an obligation. [...] It is a duty for an ecclesiastic to dress modestly; it is an obligation to wear black clothing and arabat".³

2. OBLIGATION AND DUTY IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS

2.1. A few texts

We read in the preface to the *Duties of a Christian*: "All that a Christian must do in this world is to know God and love him: all his obligations are included in this" (CL 20,x = DA 0,0,18).

The writer says the same thing in a title on the following page: "First part of the two duties of a Christian towards God, which are to know and to love him" (CL 20,1 = DA 100). One could say, in other words, that the obligations of a Christian are reduced to the two duties of knowing and loving God. It would seem that the two terms are synonymous.

De La Salle speaks of the "three obligations of married persons", one of which is "to remain together always", and a little later, of "the first duty of married persons which is to remain together always" (CL 20, 384 = DA 310,1,5). Duty and obligation are seen, therefore, as being synonymous. Another example: the duties and obligations of a Christian are mentioned when the following question is asked: "What is the connection between the obligation a Christian has to observe the commandments of God and the duty he has to love God?" (CL 20,9 = DB 0,3,6). Obligation seems to be more concrete and to derive from duty, but the two words often seem interchangeable in practice.

2.2. The verbs "devoir" (to have to, must) and "obliger" (to oblige)

The use of the verbs *devoir* and *obliger* is characterised by the same kind of interchangeability. We read in one of the Founder's meditations: "You are obliged to teach these holy maxims to the children" (MD 44,2). In another, the Founder speaks of those "whom you must instruct" (MD 37,1).

Elsewhere we find: "You should begin by giving them good example" (MF 92,2) and "You are obliged to give them good example" (MD 69,1). We could quote many other examples: the context might be dif-

ferent, but the verbs *devoir* and *être obligé* would express the same idea.

2.3. Conclusion

We see, therefore, that De La Salle appears to make no real distinction in his mind between duty and obligation. In both cases, there is something we must absolutely do or not do in order to be pleasing to God. These nouns are often preceded by the same verb, and in both cases the context is that of constrained behaviour. The Founder's use of words does not imply value judgments regarding the nature of the actions done nor of their motives: a moral judgment is still needed.

3. DUTY AND MORALITY

3.1. A very clear example

The following extract from the preface of the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness* is significant: "It is a surprising thing that most Christians look upon propriety and politeness as purely human and social attributes, [...] they do not consider them as a virtue related to God, to one's neighbour and to ourselves. This shows how little Christianity there is in the world, and how few people there are who live in it and behave according to the spirit of Jesus Christ. And yet it is this spirit alone which should inspire all your actions so that they may become holy and pleasing to God. This is an obligation St Paul reminds us of when he speaks to us in the person of the first Christians, saying that, just as we must live according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, so we must also behave in all things according to this same spirit" (CL 19,1f = RB 0,0,1f).

We see from this extract that the Founder of the Christian Schools makes God the source of all duties and obligations. Whatever we do, we must live and behave, he says, according to the spirit of God. "It is an obligation".

3.2. The origin of duty according to De La Salle

De La Salle does not deal with the origin of duty explicitly. It would seem that he thought that everybody believed in the existence and benevolent presence of God in the world, with the result that everybody sought "to know him, adore him, love him and

obey him", and suffered deep guilt-feelings if they failed to do so. Like St Paul, De La Salle thought that nothing could escape from the control of God's Spirit. Nothing in our lives escapes morality.

3.3. De La Salle and morality

The word "morality" is used rarely by De La Salle. It occurs only 10 times in his works, even though morality is never from his mind.

The Trévoux dictionary (1721) defines morality as follows: "Moral doctrine, the art of living well, science that teaches how to lead one's life, perform one's actions". It illustrates what it says by a quotation from P. Lamy: "Read the book by Fr Mourgues: the parallel he draws between Christian morality and that of the ancient philosophers shows the superiority of our holy maxims to those of human wisdom".

The quotation calls to mind the use of the word "maxims" in De La Salle's writings, where it occurs 172 times. Maxims must be "observed, practised, followed"; one can "make profession of them"; one cannot "refute them" just as one cannot refute "the doctrine of Jesus Christ" (MD 5,1). Are not these practical means of acquitting oneself of one's duties?⁴

3.4. Conclusion

It is time to define the Lasallian concept of duty. We take our definition from Br Jean Pungier: "De La Salle speaks of duties in the strict sense of the term.

[...] For the Founder, the *Duties of the Christian* derive from his very nature, from the law governing his being. Their source is ontological. [...] The fundamen-

tal moral attitude is to act in conformity with the demands of the two duties that are incumbent on him" (PUNGIER, p. 154, see in bibliography).

4. DUTY AND THE LAW

4.1. Various examples

The 1706 manuscript copy of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* includes the following observation: "Man is so liable to laxness [...] that he needs written rules to ensure he does his duty" (CL 24, Preface = CE 0,0,1). It is an interesting observation because it expresses clearly the practical need for the law, and for a written law, "to prescribe our duty for us" (CL 20,102 = DA 202,0,2).

The same idea is reflected in the *Rules* when they speak about reading the *New Testament*: the Brothers "will not spend a single day without reading from it [...] considering it as their first and principal rule" (RC 2,3).

The Brothers need not only written *Rules*, but also the voice of their superior revealing to them the will of God. "Ah, how unfortunate are those whose superiors never or hardly ever give them an opportunity to practise obedience" (MD 13,3).

De La Salle has the same attitude towards the commandments of the Church: "The intention of the Church in ordering the faithful to attend holy Mass is to oblige them [...] to do their duty to God by doing so" (CL 17,11 = I 1,4,1); even though, as De La Salle points out, in the days of "Pope St Anacletus [...] there was no positive commandment of the Church obliging them to communicate. However, the fervour of the faithful was so great that they did not need orders to make them acquit themselves of this duty" (CL 17,239 = I 5,2,4).

Finally, we can note the following sentence from one of De La Salle's letters: "I shall make him do his duty" (LA 35,3).

4.2. Need for knowledge

"One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters [...] and cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as

Christians" (MR 193,2). This sums up the whole mission of the Brothers: "It is your duty to teach your disciples the knowledge of God" (MF 100,2). And De La Salle reminds them that they are obliged "to instil his holy love in the hearts of those" they instruct (MD 39,1).

4.3. Duty and obedience

Speaking of the obligation to hear Mass on Sundays, De La Salle tells us that duty can be prescribed by law and in particular by the commandments of God and of the Church (CL 17,11 = I 1,4,1). Duty cannot be learnt spontaneously from personal relations, especially in one's "employment". Often some external mediation is required to define it and even provide it with sanctions.

For De La Salle, a person's whole life is, or ought to be, regulated by the duty God prescribes for him by revealing his will through the intermediary of others.⁵

He is nonetheless on his guard against the perversion of duty typical of legalism. In chapter 16 of the *Rules*, entitled "On Regularity", we read: "It is necessary for the Brothers to apply to themselves and to take as the foundation and support of their regularity what St Augustine says at the beginning of his rule, that those who live in a community must love God above all things and then their neighbour, because these are the principal commandments given us by God, and because if we separate regularity of whatever kind from the observation of these two commandments it is of no use whatever for salvation" (RC 13,1).

Further on he says: "All will consider important the failure to observe a small point of regularity, wishing to perform in all things and very exactly the will of God which is indicated for them by the Rules and by the practices of their Institute" (RC 13,4).

It is, therefore, concern for the will of God that should govern the attitude of Brothers regarding the law. De La Salle offers an example of this in the person of Jesus Christ especially during his Passion: "O the loving abandonment of the human will of

Jesus, submissive in everything to the divine will. [...] Be a disciple of Jesus in this so as to have no other will except that of God" (MD 24,3).

De La Salle recommends, then, a fervent devotion to obedience as a practical indication of a sense of duty. See the article on *Obedience* in the present volume.

4.4. Duty and sanction

Law implies sanctions for those who break it. However, despite De La Salle's voluntarism when speaking of obedience, he rarely speaks of sanctions. In the *Lasallian Vocabulary*, "punishment" occurs 12 times, "chastisement" 16 times, "under pain of 25 times, and "correction", used almost exclusively in a school and not a spiritual or doctrinal context, 120 times.

In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, we find the expression "to give an account" used three or four times, and there are some allusions to God's judgment: "If you do not fail at all in your duty [...] so that you can face his judgment" (MR 205,1); or "Ensure, then, that you can answer him that you have acquitted yourself well of all those duties" (MR 205,3); and "If [...] you have not wasted your time on useless things, or even on useful things not connected with your duty" (MR 206,1).

In practice, however, sanctions did exist in the lives of the first Brothers. They were imposed on the Brothers by their superiors or Director; and the Brothers, in their turn, imposed them on their pupils. The biographers refer even to some cases where the person at fault imposed a sanction on himself. Also, in community each day there was the exercise of self-accusation. Once a week, there was an exercise of mutual

accusation, the Brothers had to give an account of themselves in redden, and go to confession.

But the chief sanction for a soul consecrated to God was his own awareness of his faults and his sinful state. This is the meaning of the expression "under pain of sin", used to invite a person to control himself and curb his passions.

Correction took place in Lasallian schools, but the Founder preferred it to be rare. It was better to form consciences and awaken the love of God and sentiments nobler than fear. When it is thought necessary to correct a stubborn child, for example, "the teacher will gently make him recognise and admit his fault [...] then he will correct him [...] making him first ask God's pardon on his knees, and then that of his teacher and his companions whom he has scandalised" (CL 24,162 = CE 15,6,18).

4.5. In an atmosphere of charity

We read in the *Duties of a Christian*: "It is, therefore, a fundamental duty for Christians to have charity, and this admirable virtue covers everything they have to do in this world. [...] It is also in the practice of this virtue that all that God orders us consists, since all the commandments of God depend on it. Jesus Christ assures us [...] the whole law is included in only two commandments" (CL 20,90 = DA 201,1,2).

According to the Founder, this loving attitude towards God should be enough to make a Christian fulfil his duties towards God and his neighbour. However, he speaks also of the existence of hell, the ultimate and irrevocable sanction (CL 20,88 = DA 106,0,16).

5. THE DUTY OF STATE

The preface to the first volume of the *Duties of a Christian* begins as follows: "To belong to a profession and not to know what it is, not to know even what it is called, what it involves and what are the chief duties of this state, seems to be completely contrary to common sense and right reason" (CL 20,ij = DA 0,0,1). The words *état* (state), *profession* (profession) and *emploi* (employment) are used often in conjunction with *devoir* (duty) in Lasallian writing intended for the Brothers.

According to the Trévoux dictionary, *emploi* means work or an occupation which one obtains or takes up by oneself; *état* is used to refer to the different ranks or positions of persons based on their responsibilities, function, profession or work.

De La Salle does not seem to distinguish greatly between these two words: often they are synonymous. And so he speaks of a "holy employment" or of "an employment which is close to that of priests". He speaks even of looking upon this employment "as an

eminent function" and "of making oneself worthy of it" (MR 199,1).

The word "state", on the other hand, would seem to refer to the situation of a "consecrated person", or of one "withdrawn from the world", which seems much the same thing. The expression "what there is exterior about your state" would seem to indicate they are synonymous. This has created problems, however. A case in point is the addition of the phrase "and to those of your employment" to the 1922 text of the *Meditations* (MD 58,3), giving the following: "You should apply yourself to the ministry to which he has called you and devote yourself entirely to spiritual things and to those of your employment".⁶

Elsewhere De La Salle writes: "The commandments of God are laws that he himself has made to prescribe us our duty; and as we have duties to God and duties to our neighbour, it was quite appropriate for God to give us these two sorts of commandment" (CL 20,102 = DA 202,0,2). Duties to God and to one's neighbour differ according to each person's state — "a Christian's external behaviour must conform to that of Jesus Christ" — as well as according to his profession (CL 19,IV = RB 0,0,8).

There are two sentences from De La Salle's writings inspired by the *Meditations* of Julien Hayneufve which are enlightening: "One will never acquire more perfection except by fulfilling the duties of one's employment (*charge*), providing that one accomplishes them in view of the order of God" (CL 10,114 = EP 3,0,3). "Rest assured that you will never accomplish your salvation better, and you will never acquire so much perfection, as by acquitting yourself well of the duties of your state, providing that you do so in view of the order of God" (CL 15,95 = R 16,14). We can see the extent and importance of duties connected with one's state or employment (*charge*).⁷

Finally, we can compare the following text from Vatican II with one from the *Rules*: "Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties towards his neighbour and even God, and jeopardises his eternal salvation" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43). In the *Rules* we read: "Being well convinced that they should think only of him [God] and of what he ordains, that is, of what concerns their duty and employment" (RC 2,7).

6. PAYING ONE'S RESPECTS ('RENDRE SES DEVOIRS')

Among the uses of *devoir* (duty) there is the one in the expression *rendre ses devoirs* (paying one's respects), which occurs 80 times and which represents 25.15 % of all the cases in which *devoir* is used.

This expression comes first of all from the vocabulary of politeness. It has to do with relationships. The Trévoux dictionary defines it as follows: "To acquit oneself with regard to someone else of what one owes him". This is illustrated as follows: "pay one's respects (*voeux*) to God, pay one's respects (*devoirs et respects*) to one's superiors, swear fealty and pay homage to one's lord". We find all this reflected in the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness*.

However, De La Salle uses this expression only 9 times in the context of politeness. More often (71 times out of 80) it refers to God. When it does it is usually accompanied by a verb which emphasises the meaning: adore, thank, beg, praise. And so out of the 18 times that "devoir" is used in EM, 16 times occur in the expression "pay one's respects".

Is the Founder applying the duties of propriety to God? One should say rather that he is referring to the duties of a creature to his creator: "For God only is amiable and essentially good in himself. If we love anything else but him, we do him an injury for we thereby prefer something infinitely below God to God himself (MD 70,1).

In the *Duties of a Christian*, the Founder recognises only two essential duties: "All that a Christian must do in this world is to know God and love him. All his obligations consist in this" (CL 20,XII = DA 0,0,18). In the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, we read: "We make an act of adoration next because the first way a Christian must pay his respects to God is by adoring him" (CL 14,45 = EM 4,145).

Of the 16 times the expression "pay one's respects" is used in this work, it is accompanied 11 times by the word "adoration" or "adore". For example: "We make an act of adoration by paying our respects to Our Lord" (CL 14,100 = EM 12,271) or "I paid my respects to

God by an act of adoration" (CL 14,125 = EM 20,334,2).

The word *devoir* is used in a somewhat special way in the expression "one will acquit oneself of this duty in the house" (RC 30,20,25). This occurs in the *Rules* when they speak of paying a visit to the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday and Good Friday (RC 30,20,25). The use of *devoir* in this context calls to mind inevitably its use in the expression *rendre ses devoirs* (pay one's respects) with the meaning of "mak-

ing a courtesy call", since there is no obligation involved, only convention.

In the *Duties of a Christian*, the Founder insists that all the duties we have are linked to that of loving God:

"Q. Why is the obligation that a Christian has to adore God linked to the duty of loving God? A. Because whoever really loves God knows the respect he owes him and is careful to pay it to him" (CL 21,8 = DB 0,3,4).

7. CONCLUSION: THE "FUNDAMENTAL DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO HAVE CHARITY" (CL 20,90 = DA 201,1,2)

While the word *devoir* (duty) is not used in any personal or original way in the writings of De La Salle, it is used frequently when he is dealing with the Christian instruction of children and the spiritual formation of his Brothers. These writings indicate, in particular, the attitude a Christian should have towards God and, because of God, towards the people around him.

Obedience consists in doing the will of God in all things, and in adoring this will, which is often expressed through human intermediaries. This obedience is directed as much to the written Rules as to the orders that are given, always by God, in an atmosphere of respect and love. The following prayer is an excellent illustration of this:

"Let us pay our respects to Jesus Christ [...].
I adore you, O my Saviour Jesus,
only and eternal Son of God,
who became man [...]. I thank
you for your goodness
in dying on a cross
to atone to God for my sins,
to deliver me from the pains of hell
and to earn for me eternal life.
I give myself completely to you
so that my only reason for living is to love you.
Reign in my heart all
the days of my life
through your holy love
and after my death make me
reign with you in heaven".
(CL18,8 = E2,6).

Duty as described by the Founder is portrayed as austere and voluntarist. However, it is accompanied also by mercy, compassion and consolation, received with gratitude from God without having been sought: "The more exact you are in this respect [observing the Rule], the more God will [...] grant you attachment to your state" (MF 104,1).

If we succumb to sloth, which is "slowness and repugnance regarding acquitting ourselves of our duty", the thought of God can cure us of it, if it is accompanied by a practical resolution "to regulate exactly each moment of the day" (CL 23,382 = GA 0,19,8). De La Salle, this "terrible Christian" was formed by God, step by step, over a long period of time, through the events of his life.

"Through the spirit of faith you will do
"Everything, and for God alone" (CL 15,5 = R 3,1)
he said to his Brothers. That is how he lived his life in faith. "I adore in all things the conduct of God in my regard", he confessed on his death-bed (CL 8,174).

If the world despises duty and the obligation of conscience, limiting its moral effort to the observation of the law, a penal obligation involving sanctions, the disciple of Jesus Christ, having received the revelation of God's love for mankind, opposes to it the "fundamental duty of Christians to have charity" (CL 20,90 = DA 201,1,2). This demanding language finds its meaning in faith and is addressed to those who work "to obtain their salvation". Only then is it possible, with De La Salle, to call charity as a "lovable virtue" (CL 20,90 = DA 201,2,2).

¹ A study of the frequency of the use of subjects with the verb *devoir* in the various writings of the Founder gives us the following results:

<i>on</i> (one)	852 times
<i>nous</i> (we)	512 times
<i>vous</i> (you)	347 times
<i>je</i> (I)	49 times.

If we take only the catechetical works, we find

<i>nous</i>	33.83 %
<i>on</i>	25.56 %
<i>Chretien</i> (Christian)	23.06 %.

And in the DA, a work less directly intended for the pupils;

<i>chretien</i>	1.10 %
<i>on</i>	25.67 %
<i>nous</i>	21.08 %.

In the *Meditations*, a work intended primarily for the Brothers:

	MD	MF	MR
<i>vous</i>	36.30 %	37.45 %	55.67 %
<i>nous</i>	6.93%	15.30%	1.03%
<i>on</i>	12.54 %	6.51 %	4.12 %

The verbs *obliger* (oblige) used 147 times, and even more *être obligé* (to be obliged) used 480 times, and the noun *obligation* used 151 times could be the basis for a similar study. In addition there is the verb *falloir* (have to, must, be necessary) used 1,743 times. As the latter is used only in the impersonal form, the question of subjects does not arise.

² A study of the frequency of use of the verb *devoir* (to have to) gives us the following raw figures and a percentage of its total use. They are classified in a way that shows the percentage of use, taking into account the length of the relevant document, in relation to the works of De La Salle as a whole:

RB	558	17.34	6.50
DA	479	14.88	12.57
DC	320	9.94	7.03
MF	307	9.54	9.96
MD	301	9.35	6.71
DB	260	8.08	6.96
CE	252	7.83	9.23
I	173	5.37	6.88
R	132	4.10	3.59

EM	105	3.26	4.61
MR	97	3.01	2.09
GA	69	2.14	2.94
L	65	2.02	2.73
RC	51	1.58	2.53
PA	18	0.55	0.75
E	17	0.52	1.67
FD	6	0.18	4.14
MH	5	0.15	0.34
RD	2	0.06	0.53

It appears, therefore, that the RB contain proportionally a higher number of references to this verb, while the other works have proportions that reflect the works as a whole.

The noun *devoir* (duty) gives the following figures:

DA	112	31.37	12.57
DB	48	13.44	6.96
CE	26	7.28	9.23
MF	24	6.72	9.96
MD	21	5.88	6.71
MR	19	5.32	2.09
EM	18	5.04	4.61
GA	18	5.04	2.94
I	16	4.48	6.88
RB	15	4.20	6.50
R	12	3.36	3.59
L	11	3.08	2.73
DC	9	2.50	7.03
RC	5	1.40	2.53
E	2	0.50	1.67
PA	1	0.28	0.75

The differences here are more noticeable. The two words *devoir* need, therefore, to be treated separately, as if the fact of "having to" (the verb *devoir*) did not always lead to the appearance of the noun *devoir* (duty). The difference between RB and DA is very clear.

A study of the use of the verbs *devoir* and *falloir* (both meaning "to have to"), on the one hand, and the nouns *devoir* (duty) and *obligation* on the other, shows that the nouns are more used in the DA.

<i>devoir</i>	31.37 %
<i>obligation</i>	26.60 %

An examination of these nouns in RB gives us :

<i>devoir</i>	4.20 %
<i>obligation</i>	6.00 %

Verbs are more used in RB :

devoir 17.34 %

falloir 27.25 %

In DA, the figures for the verbs are:

devoir 14.88 %

falloir 9.69 %.

³ The *Dictionnaire des mots de la foi chrétienne* defines duty as follows: "What we must do because of divine law, human law, a precept, one's state or convention. [...] To do one's duty = to act as one ought to act". These same three origins of duty had already been defined in more or less the same terms by Furetierc.

Imbs in the *Trésor de la langue française, Dictionnaire du XX^e siècle*, offers two definitions of duty: "(a) An imperative of conscience, considered in general terms, which induces a person, without necessarily forcing him, to accomplish what is prescribed by virtue of an obligation of a religious, moral or legal nature, (b) In given circumstances, any behaviour to be followed, or any action to be accomplished by virtue of an obligation of a religious, moral or legal nature".

There follow definitions of some expressions: duty of state, Easter duties, professional duties, religious duties, Christian duties, the duties of a respectable person. In this dictionary, duty is not seen as synonymous with obligation; duty is born of obligation, which is defined as a moral, religious or social bond; necessity or duty by which one is obliged to do or give something.

⁴ It is perhaps useful to see what Jean Tonneau writes in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (vol. 3, col. 653f, article

on *Devoir*): "If the framework of duty is not capable of encompassing the whole of Christian life [...], it is because it does not give an exhaustive definition of morality and does not provide the radical explicative principle".

The writer then goes on to examine 1° the extent of duties, 2° the determination of duties from a formal point of view, and then concludes: "The domain of duties seems to coincide with that of social morality properly understood. A more comprehensive morality would insist on the principle of order [...]. The morality of duty is limited to the level of relations, and its characteristics reveal a social morality whose supreme law is to respect a legal order, in which each individual has his place and plays his role. It does not claim to express the natural needs of the individual, but the requirements of his state and of the condition in which he is placed".

³ De La Salle's idea is close to that expressed by Jean Tonneau: "Duty expresses in all certainty God's will for us" (*Diet, de spiritualité*, art. on *Devoir*).

⁶ This addition does not appear in Battersby's translation.

⁷ It is interesting to read what the French edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) has to say: "The faithful must distinguish carefully between the rights and duties that are incumbent on them as members of the Church, and those that involve them as members of human society. They should try to reconcile both, not for getting that Christian conscience must be their guide in all temporal matters, because no human activity, even of a temporal nature, can be withdrawn from God's dominion" (p. 912, quoting *Lumen Gentium* 36).

Complementary themes

Child-Pupil-Disciple

Christian teacher

Commandments

Counsels

Correction

Duties of a Christian

Education

Employment

Faith (spirit of)

God

Love-charity

Parents of the pupils

Penitent

Pupil-teacher relation

Rule-Regularity

Sin

State

Vigilance

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76. EMPLOYMENT

Summary

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1. MEANING OF THE WORD "EMPLOYMENT"

In the 17th century, the word "employment" had many more meanings than it has nowadays. The French dictionaries of the time give the following:

- **use (of things):** "He will make the Brother who is in charge of the kitchen give an account of his conduct and of his employment (*emploi*) of time" (*Rule of the Brother Director*, CL 25,158 = FD 1,42). In practice, when the Founder uses the verb "to employ", this is the only meaning he has in mind: "God has given us time during our lives only so that we can use (*employer*) it for our salvation, and we will render him an account of the use (*emploi*) we will have made of it" (CL 21,134 = DB 2,16,13).

- **human activity of all kinds:** "Recreation is an exercise for which one can use some time during the course of the day to give the mind rest from serious matters, and the body from the tiring employments given during the day" (CL 19,131 = RB 205,0,349; cf. *id.* 148 = 3,394).

- **permanent occupation:** "Those who have some function or employment which is an occasion of sin for them..." (CL 17,150 = I 2,7,10). "Tell me if you are still in the same employment and if you are not still looking for something else" (Letter to Gabriel Drolin, dated February 11th 1705 = LA 16,9).

- **charge, responsibility:** "If they are energetic and self-assured, they should be given some employment

in school, such as that of inspector, if they are thought capable of it, or of paper collector" (CL 24,160 = CE 15,6,13). "The two reciters will be appointed each month. [...] One can let them carry on if there is no one else who can acquit himself of this employment equally well" (CL 24,205, 1720 edition).

- **profession:** "They will never be capable of any employment because they do not know how to read or write" (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,18). "Those who take up this employment and make it their profession ..." (CL 19,156 = RB 205,5,411).

- **social standing, position:** "A person who is distinguished because of his employment or his qualifications" (CL 19,233 = RB 208,1,593). "Asking God for honourable responsibilities and employments because of the ostentation and pomp that they involve, and the empty glory that one receives from them" (CL 20,451 = DA 403,1,20).

In addition to these six meanings, there is one more we find in the writings of De La Salle, namely, the **role stemming from a name or a title**. In practice, De La Salle restricts this use to religious contexts and the roles involved here are either positive or negative in the scheme of salvation: "The employment and occupation of Jesus Christ in heaven as God-Man and as mediator..." (CL 20,60 = DA 104,10,5). "To honour St Michael [...] because of his employment which

is to meet souls as they leave their bodies and lead them to the judgment seat of God" (CL 22,221 = DC 44,3,2). "The rebel angels who are called demons or devils have quite a different employment, which is to tempt people" (CL 20,21 = DA 103,0,7).

It is quite likely that De La Salle was not the only one to give this specific meaning to the word "employment". One should be able to find examples of this use in the spiritual works of the period. Be that as it may, we shall keep this special meaning as the basis for what we shall say at the end of this article on the employment of the Brothers.

The word "function" used less frequently than "em-

ployment" (77 times as opposed to 215), has a more restricted meaning. It refers to a particular service which has a well-defined place within the overall activity of the employment. That is why it is used most often in the plural, whereas employment is generally found in the singular. An employment is exercised through a series of functions which have to be carried out successively if one is to acquit oneself well of it: "Though you are required by Almighty God to exercise the exterior functions of your employment..." (MF 127,3). "Those chosen by Providence for the work of educating children must fulfil the function of guardian angels (in their employment) in their regard" (MR 197, title).

2. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE BROTHERS

2.1. Greatness and necessity

For the Brothers, their employment is, first of all, the consequence of a call from God and the Church: "It is God who has called you, who has chosen (destined)¹ you for this ministry (employment), and who has sent you to work in his vineyard" (MR 201,1). "It is God who, in his infinite goodness and power, has called you to impart the knowledge of the Gospel to those who have not yet received it. Look upon yourself, therefore, as the minister of God, and acquit yourself of your duties (of your employment) with the greatest possible zeal as having to render an account to the Lord" (MF 140,2). "How much, then, you must consider yourselves honoured by the Church, to be chosen by her for such a holy and exalted work (employment), to procure for children the knowledge of our religion and the Christian spirit" (MR 199,1).

It is a remarkable favour that is conferred on the Brothers and they must accept it with adoration and gratitude: "Adore God's Providence in withdrawing you from the world to enable you to practise and acquire virtue. This is necessary for you in the accomplishment of your duties of state (employment), and for the purpose of training a large number of children in the Christian spirit"² (MF 131,1). "Thank God yourself for the grace he bestowed upon you by calling you from the world to so holy a state (employment) as yours, in which you instruct children and train them to piety" (MF 99,1; cf. MR 199,3).

If the Founder insists on these two dispositions, it is because he realises that God calls the Brothers to "an employment which is really his own work"³ (MD 62,1), in view of which he has established among his People the necessary ministries: "God has established in the Church apostles, prophets and teachers [...], he has also established you in your ministry (employment)" (MR 201,1; cf. MF 167,2 & 186,2). "It is thus, that with Christian courage and firmness, we must uphold the interests of God, and this is what you are expected to do in your employment. You perform one of the chief functions of the Apostles by instructing the new Christians, that is, your pupils who are newly filled with the spirit of God in baptism" (MF 102,1).

In the light of this, De La Salle does not hesitate to apply to the Brothers the titles⁴ that correspond to their ecclesial mission: "Since you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work (employment) that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ himself (MR 195,2). "Looking upon yourselves as the ministers of God and the administrators of his mysteries" (MR 193,1). "Jesus Christ has chosen you among so many others to be his cooperators in the salvation of souls" (MR 196,2). "You act as mediator in their regard, God making use of you to teach them the means of salvation" (MD 56,3).

He is equally convinced that the task of teaching youth is one of the most necessary in the Church (MR 199, title). "You must, then, look upon this work (em-

ployment) entrusted to you by pastors, by fathers and mothers, as one of the most important⁵ and most necessary services (functions) in the Church" (MR 199,1). "Look upon your work (employment) as one of the most important and excellent in the Church, since it is the most capable of sustaining it and of giving it a solid foundation" (MF 155,1).

2.2. Purpose

The greatness and necessity of the Brothers' employment derives from its purpose, which is none other than that of God's plan of salvation (cf. MR 193,3). For De La Salle this is an *idée-force* to which returns whenever he has a chance. Here are some examples: "You have been called by God to a state (employment) wherein you have to labour for the salvation of souls" (MD 7,1). "Your mission (employment) would be purposeless if it did not have in view the salvation of souls" (MF 148,2). The third point of MR 201 is worth reading also.

For this purpose the Brothers must touch the hearts of their pupils, inspire them with the Christian spirit and so win them for God: "You are engaged in a ministry (employment) wherein you have to touch hearts. But you cannot possibly do this without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Beseech God to confer on you today the same grace as he gave the Apostles, so that after filling you with his Spirit for your own sanctification, he may confer it on you for the salvation of others also" (MD 43,3; Cf. MF 139,3). "Your mission (employment) does not consist in making your pupils Christians, but rather in making them true Christians." This is all the more necessary as it would avail them but little to have received baptism if they did not live according to the Christian spirit. But that we may impart the spirit of Christianity to others we must possess it ourselves" (MF 171,3).

That is why, when speaking of the Brothers' employment, De La Salle borrows expressions from St Paul, such as "laying the foundations of the Church" (1 Co 3,10; Ep 2,20) and "begetting in Jesus Christ" (1 Co 4,15; Ga 4,19): "Consider that you are working in your ministry (employment) for the building of the Church through your teaching of the children whom God has entrusted to your care. These children are becoming a part of the structure whose foundation was laid by the Apostles. For this reason, you must fulfil your ministry (employment) as the Apostles fulfilled

theirs" (MR 200,1; Cf. MR 199,1). "God has bestowed on you an honour equal to that of St Joachim by placing you in the position (employment) you occupy, since he destines you to be the spiritual father of the children whom you instruct. If St Joachim was chosen to be father of the Most Blessed Virgin, you are called to engender children in Christ, and also to make Jesus live anew in their hearts" (MF 157,1). For De La Salle, these scriptural references are not simply stylistic embellishments. In his thinking, they serve to build up a theology of the ministry based on Scripture.

2.3. Means

Brothers fulfil the purpose of their employment only by striving to reach both the minds and hearts of their pupils, that is, by using the dual approach, consecrated by tradition, of teaching and education.⁷ And so they give both "instruction" and "catechism": "You are the successors of the Apostles in their task of catechising and teaching the poor" (MR 200,1). "In your employment you have to teach the truths of faith to your pupils and make them learn their religion. To this work you should devote yourself wholeheartedly, and even sacrifice your life if necessary in order to accomplish it properly" (MF 135,2; cf. MF 150,3).

They link education and training to piety: "See, then, how important it is for you to apply yourself to the best of your ability to the education of those entrusted to you, and to the training of these boys to piety. This indeed is the primary object and very purpose of your employment" (MF 186,1). "Among the duties of your state (employment), do you prefer that of inspiring your pupils with piety to all others, whatever they may be?" (MF 125,3; cf. MR 200,2).

Teaching and educating would not be enough if the Brothers did not add vigilance and the witness of their own lives: "You ought to have as great a care and affection for the children entrusted to you, in order to preserve or re-establish their innocence and to guard them from whatever may interfere with their education and prevent them from acquiring piety. [...] This in fact is the first thing you must do in your employment" (MF 110,3). "By your mission (employment) you are required to labour, not against heretics, but against the evil inclinations of your pupils, by which they are so powerfully urged towards sin. It is not by mere natural knowledge that you will achieve

the required result, but by the spirit of God and the assistance of his grace" (MF 161,2; cf. MF 114,2). "Let this be your first concern and the first effect of your vigilance in your work (employment), to be ever attentive to your students to forestall any action that is bad, or even in the least improper. Help them to avoid anything that has the slightest appearance of sin" (MR 194,2).

In his meditation for the feast of St Anselm, De La Salle exclaims: "How little it needs to change good will in children and youths!" and he adds that the example of this saint "shows how necessary it is for those entrusted with their care to watch over their own conduct, that there may be nothing therein capable of turning a soul away from the service of God, or of leading it to neglect its duty. Do you, in your employment, give this matter all possible attention?" (MF 115,1; cf. MF 127,2). "You are in a position (employment) where everybody can observe you. You ought, therefore, to follow the advice which St Paul gave to his disciple Titus: [...] To make himself in all things a model of good works in his teaching, by his irreproachable morals, by the good example of his behavior, and by his seriousness" (MD 69,1 quoting Ti 2,7).

2.4. Fruits

Employment conducted in this fashion bears much fruit, as much for the Brothers as for their pupils, as we read in MR 195,3: "This will be the glory of my Father, that you bear much fruit" (Jn 15,8; cf. Mt 7,20).

The fruit produced "in the souls of the children" (MR 208,1) are listed in the third point of MD 60 and MR 207, which should be read in their entirety. There is also the following quotation: "Virtue cannot remain hidden. When it shines forth it draws all hearts. The example thus given makes such a powerful impression that those who see it, or hear about it, are impelled to follow it. Do you produce a similar effect on your pupils by your sedate behaviour and your piety? This is the chief means you should use to win souls to God" (MF 158,3).

At the same time he indicates the spiritual benefits that Brothers draw from the exercise of their employment: "Do you, in your employment, give this matter all possible attention? On this depends, to a large extent, the progress which your pupils will make in piety, and the fruit which you yourself will derive from instructing them" (MF 115,1). He explains that this

fruit is "the light that your prayers will obtain for you from God and the fidelity you bring to your work (employment)" (MR 197,3).

While taking care, all the same, to distinguish between the fruits acquired by Brothers and pupils, he insists always on their interaction: any fruit for the Brothers is always accompanied by fruit for the pupils and vice versa. We will see this in all the quotations that follow. The categorical tone of De La Salle's remark serves to reinforce what we have said: "...since you are devoid of good fruit, you are unable to make your pupils produce any" (MD 60,3).

2.5. Requirements

2.5.1. BASIC ATTITUDES

The call of God and of the Church, the privilege which employment represents, the active implementation of its aims and the resulting fruits — all this makes a certain number of demands on the Brothers, which can be called ministerial.⁸ These are, first of all, the basic attitudes to which the Founder returns constantly:

- **the total gift of self to God:** "Have you consecrated yourself so wholeheartedly to God as to renounce all else and to think only of him and the duties of your state (employment)?" (MF 146,3). "It is truly sacrificing one's life for God to employ it in his service, and this is what you have occasion to do in your profession⁹ and employment. You should not be unduly troubled if you die within a few years, provided you save your own soul and win others to God" (MD 70,2).

- **union with Jesus:** "All the fruit you can produce in the children entrusted to you in your employment will be genuine and efficacious only to the extent that Jesus Christ gives it his blessing and that you remain attached to him as a branch to the vine" (MR 195,3). "Jesus Christ, seeing that you regard him as the one who can do everything — in your employment — and yourself as an instrument to be moved only by him, will not fail to grant you what you ask" (MR 196,1).

- **filled with the Spirit of God:** "When a person who is called to an apostolic mission first fills himself with God and his Holy Spirit, [...] he can accomplish anything. Nothing can resist him, not even God (so to speak)" (MF 171,3; cf. 171,1).

- **interior spirit:** "Interior recollection [...] is very necessary for you in order to master your passions

and not let them escape your control on the various occasions that present themselves in the exercise of your employment" (CL 15,162 = R 15,4,1).

- **presence of God:** "There is nothing, in fact, that we should strive after with more care, because it gives a foretaste of eternal bliss, and because it is so useful to you in your employment. As your work relates to God and the salvation of souls, it is most important not to lose sight of God while performing it" (MF 179,3).

- **purity of intention:** "To succeed in your mission, you should have no earthly views. Your only concern should be to discover what is most conducive to the salvation of the souls confided to your care, for this is the end and object of your state and employment" (MF 107,3; cf. MR 196,3). "We must do everything in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and only to please God and not men. This should be your attitude, and it is the only motive God wants you to have in your employment" (MR 206,3).

- **obedience:** "If you labour for the salvation of souls, it must be through submission to your Superiors and in fulfilment of the will of God. In this way you will sanctify yourself— in this employment — and bring about the sanctification of others" (MF 135,3). "It is true that the exterior nature of your employment requires the practice of other virtues also, but rest assured that you will never acquit yourself of your duty properly unless you possess the virtue of obedience" (MD 7,3).

- **faith:** "Is your faith such as to enable you to touch the hearts of your pupils and inspire them with the Christian spirit ? This is the greatest miracle you can perform, and one which God expects of you since it corresponds with the purpose of your state" (MF 139,3).

- **zeal:** "When we are employed in an apostolic ministry, we must add zeal to action,¹⁰ or else all we do for our neighbour will have but little result" (MF 114,2). "You exercise an employment which requires great zeal. But this zeal would be of little use if it produced no effect. It cannot produce an effect, how ever, unless it results from the love of God which is within you" (MF 171,2). "Devote yourselves, then, with zeal and affection" to your employment, since it will be one of the most helpful means of ensuring your salvation" (MR 207,1). It is worth reading also the marvellous passages in MR 201,3.

- **love for the poor:** "Your ministry (employment) requires you that you should devote yourself to the

well-being of the poor, since it is your duty to instruct them"(MF 173,1).

For De La Salle, these basic attitudes are the direct result of the fact that this employment is "the work of God" (MD 6,2) and not "the work of man" (MD 57,2). They make the Brother an instrument suited to his apostolic mission, which is cooperating with Jesus Christ "in the salvation of children" (Cf. MR 195 title; 196 title & 2). It is from these attitudes and the help of God's grace that the Brother acquires his supernatural efficacy (MR 195,3).

2.5.2. PRACTICE OF THE VIRTUES

These basic attitudes are accompanied by the practice of virtues which are typically Lasallian:

- **disinterestedness:** "It is impossible for you to push disinterestedness too far in your employment, for it is the poor you teach. Instruct them by your example. Teach them to love poverty by practising it unselfishly as far as God may require" (MF 153,3; Cf. 179,1).

- **humility:** "In choosing our present state, we should have prepared ourselves for abasement,¹² like the Son of God when he became man, for lowliness is the characteristic of our profession B and our employment" (MF 86,2). "It is your happiness to labour for the instruction of the poor, and to fulfil a ministry (employment) which is esteemed and honoured only by those who have a truly Christian spirit" (MF 113,1). "Your work (employment) enjoys little consideration in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of God it does, for it contributes to extend his Kingdom" (MF 143,3). "Occupations (employments) which men consider lowly produce much more fruit" (MF 155,1).

- **spirit of penance:** "One of the things that contributes most to impress the truths of the Gospel upon the hearts of men, and to render them acceptable, is the example of patient endurance of persecution on the part of those who preach these truths as ministers of Christ and teachers of his doctrine. [...] Are you so disposed ? You need to be in these sentiments if you wish to produce fruit in souls" in your employment (MF 166,3). "Do not expect any other reward in your employment than having to suffer persecutions, insults, outrages and curses. [...] Rest assured that these kinds of persecution will draw down God's grace on you in abundance and his blessings on your employment" (MF 167,3; cf. MF 126,2).

- **spirit of prayer:** We cannot succeed in an apostolic mission (employment) without God's special assistance. De La Salle writes: "You will not produce much fruit in them unless you have the spirit of prayer to give unction to your words, rendering them efficacious, and penetrating to the innermost recesses of the soul" (MF 159,2). "As soon as you lose the spirit of prayer, and a love for this holy exercise, God will cease to look favourably upon you, but will consider you rather as one unworthy of your employment, which is really his own work" (MD 62,1).

- **devotion to Mary:** "One of the most efficacious means by which to accomplish the good expected of you in your employment is to have a marked devotion to Our Lady and to enkindle the same in the heart of those who have been confided to your care" (MF 150,3).

- **flight from the world:** "You must [...] leave your work and devote yourself to reading and mental prayer [...] in order to draw down upon yourself the grace of God that you need to fulfil this ministry (employment) according to the spirit and intention of the Church which entrusts it to you" (MR 200,1). "Is it still your determination to have no communication with the world? Are you prepared to live unknown? If such is the case, you will be in a position to work very fruit fully (in your employment) for the salvation of souls" (MF 143,1; cf. 161,1).

- **reserve:** "Your employment requires that you should have some communication with outsiders. Be on your guard to be ever a subject of edification, and be so reserved, modest and recollected as to diffuse every where the good odour of Jesus Christ" (MF 98,2 quoting 2 Co 2,15; cf. MD 69,3).

- **patience:** "You have this saint as your patron, and you are his successors in the same work. Do you imitate his patience?" (MF 155,2).

In another meditation, De La Salle sums up all these spiritual moral dispositions in sanctity: "Are you faithful to correspond with God's designs in your regard? Do you endeavour to attain such a degree of sanctity that you will be able to lead to holiness those for whom you are responsible?" (MF 131,1; cf. MD 39,2).

2.5.3. PRACTICAL MEANS

Holiness for the Brothers is acquired through the way of the cross of the "daily grind" (Pius XI, Janu-

ary 6th 1928). And so to the requirements we have just mentioned, we must add also those which arise from their everyday life:

- every day, **he must prepare himself** in order to do his work well: "Since you have been called by God to a state (employment) wherein you have to labour for the salvation of souls, you need to prepare yourself for it by prolonged practice in order to render yourself worthy of so holy a ministry (employment) and so be able to produce much fruit" (MD 7,1). "Bring to your employment the same dispositions as St Cajetan brought to the exercise of his ministry. [...] You must strive to attain a perfect knowledge of the truths of religion, because ignorance in such matters would be criminal since it would cause ignorance in those whom you should instruct" (MF 153,1). "In order to teach them what God has communicated to you for them, as much in your mental prayer as in the Holy scriptures which furnish you with the truths of religion and the practical maxims of the holy Gospel" (MR 198,1; cf. MF 170,1).

- he knows that, when death brings an end to his work on earth, he will have to **give an account** of it, and so he prepares for this while ensuring a happy outcome. In MD 61, the Founder quotes the Gospel words: "Give an account of your stewardship" (Lk 16,2), and then he adds: "At the end of each day, and at the end of each exercise (of your employment), God requires an account of the manner in which you have acquitted yourself of your duty" (MD 61,1). The Founder then goes into details: "You have two accounts to render to God regarding the spiritual good you are expected to effect in your position (employment). The first concerns the manner in which you discharge your duty of teaching your pupils their religion and the truths of the Gospel. [...] The second [...] concerns piety [...] whether you have inspired your pupils with this virtue" (MD 61,2 & 3).

- **this account is the only path that leads to reward.** The last meditation for the time of retreat has the title: "The reward that a Brother of the Christian Schools can expect in heaven, if he is faithful in his ministry (employment)". We read: "Consider, then, that your reward in heaven will be as great as the good you will achieve in the lives of the children who are entrusted to your care. [...] Fulfil the duties of your ministry (employment) so well that you may be able to enjoy this blessing" (MR 208,1; cf. 208,3).

3. ASSOCIATED IDEAS

3.1. State and employment

The pair "state" and "employment" occurs throughout De La Salle's writings. The texts quoted in the present article are a good illustration of this. We are sometimes given the impression that these two words are interchangeable for De La Salle. At times we find "state" in a context where our modern ways of thinking would expect the use of "employment". Whenever he makes a distinction between the two, it is not because he wants to separate them, or even less, to set them up in opposition to each other. It is rather to stress, in an explicit and clear way, that in the Lasallian charism they are absolutely indissociable.

Our natural tendency might be to reserve "state" for the religious aspect of our life and "employment" for our professional work. For the Founder, however, this distinction does not exist. When he writes "your state", he refers to the type of religious state which is proper to us, that is, that of the Brother, a lay religious dedicated to the ministry of Christian education. He includes, therefore, our work in school, which is totally apostolic. Likewise, when he writes "your employment", he does not mean only our work (the meaning which is often attributed to this word nowadays), but also the role and position that God and the Church destine for us in the work of salvation, that is, our mission of evangelisation among the Christians specifically entrusted to us: children and young people, especially if they are poor. And this employment has a decisive influence on our community life, which also is totally apostolic. It seems, therefore, that the two words "state" and "employment" describe the same reality, and that, depending on the context, they stress one or other of these two major aspects of our life.

When the Founder wishes to refer to the school work properly so called of the Brothers, he never uses the word *metier* (profession, craft, etc) which, in his days, was used only with reference to the handicrafts of the artisans, the parents of the Brothers' pupils. Instead he uses *profession* (10 times), meaning, in today's terminology, the liberal professions. This distinction is clearly illustrated by a passage in *Instructions and Prayers*, in which the Founder recommends the penitent to tell the confessor "what his profession is" before confessing his sins. "Is he a judge, lawyer

or procurator; is he a merchant and what merchandise does he deal in; is he an artisan and what is his craft; is he a student and what does he study"? (CL 17,115 = I 2,3,4). The word "work" is used more frequently, in both the singular or plural, and applies to various tasks in school: "God will shower his blessings in abundance on your work (*travail*)" (MF 126,2) and "God will bless your work (*travaux*)" (MD 7,1).

"Make me so attached to the duties of my state and employment that I will never dispense myself from them for any reason whatsoever; that I will always practise faithfully the good that you have the goodness to inspire me with; and that I will walk along the path of your commandments with such a firm step and with such promptitude, that I shall find nothing difficult in doing so" (Act to ask God for perseverance in doing good, CL 17,217 = I 3,40).

3.2. Employment and functions

"They cannot be priests [...] nor perform any function in the church" (RC 1,2). The manuscripts of the 1705,1718 and 1726 edition of *the Rule* endorse fully the major and already formal texts of the *Memoir on the Habit*, which we can date from 1689-1690: "Lay persons who [...] neither have nor can exercise any function [...] in the church. [...] Persons who [...] cannot [...] exercise any function in the church" (CL 11,353f = MH 0,0,47f). The Founder spent his life providing the Church with a new sphere of pastoral care, that of the Christian school. This is the Brothers' field of action, and nowhere else, in which they exercise "the exterior functions of [their] employment" (MF 127,3).

We mentioned these functions when we listed the means necessary for employment. In meditations 197 and 198, De La Salle summarises them by referring to "the functions of the guardian angels". They serve to communicate "the knowledge of the true good" (MR 197,1), "practice and example" (MR 197,2), "vigilance" (MR 197,3), "prayer" (MR 198,1) and "reprimands" (MR 198,2). "This is the function you must exercise with regard to your disciples" (MR 197,2).

"Often pray also to the guardian angels of your pupils, so that, under their powerful protection, these may practise more willingly and more easily what you teach them" (MF 172,3).

3.3. Retirement and presence in the world

We have already come across the love of retirement as one of the virtues necessary for employment, a virtue which includes a voluntary withdrawal from society in order to discover God in solitude and silence. The Founder attaches great importance to this fundamental disposition and he returns to it very often: "You, in like manner, can become competent to labour usefully in your employment only by applying yourself to prayer and retirement. By these two means you will be able to detach yourself completely from the world and from the inclination to sin, that you may be wholly consecrated to God" (MF 161,1).

At first sight, this requirement appears to conflict with the apostolic mission of the Brothers, which is "to keep schools" (RC 1,1), and which requires them to come into contact every day with outsiders. De La Salle sees no conflict, however, because these two requirements are equally binding on the Brothers, stemming as they do from one and the same source and inspiration, the Lasallian vocation. God cannot be divided: he addresses to them the invitation of Christ to his Apostles: "Come!" (Jn 1,39) and "Go!" (Mt 28,19).

The Founder gives some rules to help the Brothers cope with everyday situations:

- **protecting oneself from the world:** "Your duties (employment) oblige you to have occasional relations with the world. Beware lest you imbibe its spirit. Endeavour to maintain reserve and a certain degree of modesty, for this will prevent you from being affected by it" (MF 127,2).

- **going into the world only to edify others:** "Your profession requires you to mix every day with the world, where your every step is watched. You ought, therefore, to be a model of every virtue for the seculars among whom you live. You must edify them particularly by your gravity and your modesty" (MD 69,3).

- **preparing for going into the world by retirement:** "Your employment requires you to have some communication with outsiders. Be on your guard to be ever a subject of edification. [...] So act that your exterior appearance, all your words and actions may inspire virtue. It is only for this reason that God wishes you to go out. Prepare yourself in your retreat to comply with his intentions" (MF 98,2).

- **acting only according to God's orders:** "And when you have accomplished the duty of your state (employment), beware of delaying or stopping for any reason whatsoever. Hasten to return as quickly as possible. The same God who called you to this occupation (employment) now requires your return. Is any other consideration necessary? You must show on all occasions your utter dependence on God, and your willingness to go wherever he requires you at the very first sign" (MD 6,3; cf. MF 97,3 & 127,3).

In the last part of his catechism entitled *Of Exterior and Public Worship*, De La Salle asks his readers "to flee the company of people who live according to [the ways of] the world" (CL 22,173 - DC 42,9,8). However, although he uses the word "world" 781 times, nowhere in his writings do we find the expressions "flee from the world" or "flight from the world". This is a significant insight, we feel, into the Founder's attitude towards what he and Christian tradition call the "world", that is, all the powers on earth which are opposed to the spirit of the Gospel.

3.4. Employment and exercises

Regarding the daily exercises of the Brothers (RC 4,1), De La Salle makes a distinction between those of school (CL 24,1 = CE 1), those of employment (MD 61,1), those of the ministry (MF 136,1), those of community (FD 1,8) and finally spiritual exercises (MF 126,3) also called interior exercises (LA 17,18), and commonly called simply exercises.¹⁴ With meticulous logic, De La Salle demonstrates the same structural link between them that exists between state and employment. They are, in fact, the concrete way in which state and employment are implemented in everyday life.

Since employment has a supernatural aim — the salvation of souls — those who exercise it must be "saints", "filled with God" (MF 100,2). They can achieve this only by intimate union with Jesus (Cf. Jn 15,1-8). Among the means that serve to maintain this union are the "exercises". They guarantee employment a spiritual character and, with the sacraments, ensure fruitfulness in the order of grace. Without this sap, its only effects would be human: "If you do not produce as much fruit as you might in your employment, you should attribute it largely to the fact that you are not sufficiently regular, and that you do not act through obedience" (MD 57,2). This is also the meaning of

what De La Salle recommends to Brother Robert in his letter dated February 26th 1709: "Take care that your school runs well and that your community is faithful to the Rule" (LA 57,12), or more explicitly to Brother Mathias (letter dated April 13th 1708): "You must carry out not only your class duties, but also the other exercises, for class work without the spiritual exercises will not do"¹⁵ (LA 49,6; cf. LA 51,4).

There remains the real-life problem of the constant movement between community and school. If it is true that morning meditation sets the Brother aflame with enthusiasm and stimulates his zeal for his work, it is equally true that, once work is over and he returns to his "solitude", he brings with him the fatigue and worries of his ministry, and with this fatigue and these worries, he has to concentrate as best he can on his exercises. This transition is possible only if he maintains a deep state of peace in his innermost being, which gives him the freedom to act or to contemplate, to serve children and to serve God (Cf. *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, col. 1683). Traditionally, this effect is produced by a group of peace-bearing virtues, the most important of which De La Salle considers to be gentleness, charity, humility, patience, submissiveness.

Even if the famous *Memoir on the Habit* was intended as a vigorous defence of the exclusivity of the Lasallian charism, it can be seen also as expressing the essential unity of the Brothers' life: "The exercises of the community and employment in school require the entire person" (CL 11,350 = MH 0,0,10).

3.5. Employment and ability

"God does not call to an employment a person incapable of it". This somewhat bald statement, intended

to be taken literally, comes from a chapter on marriage in the *Duties of a Christian* (CL 20, 386f = DA 310,3). Before making such a commitment, a person should ask himself "if he has the ability to organise and lead a family in a Christian manner, and induce those in his care to fulfil their duties". What is involved here is responsibility for religious education in a state consecrated by God and the Church. The ability in question here is of a spiritual order: it is nothing else than the declared will to live according to the state in which God has placed us and to assume its obligations in order to achieve our salvation in this way (CL 20,387 = DA 310,3,4).

If we do not obstruct his life in us, God makes the exercise of our employment supernaturally efficacious. He does this despite all our limitations, shortcomings and mistakes. Except in the case of miracles (always a possibility, but not the normal way in which God works), grace does not make good what is lacking in nature: it does not make a person more intelligent, cleverer or braver than he already is. When St Paul begged to be released from a natural weakness which hindered his work, God replied: "My grace is enough for you, my power is at its best in weakness" (2 Co 12,9). We read Paul's response in 2 Co 4,7; 11,30; 12,5; 13,4, and he ends with a shout of victory: "There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength" (Ph 4,13).

For Brothers who feel like giving up because of their workload and problems, De La Salle has the following answer, which he originally wrote to the impossible Brother Mathias in a letter dated November 18th 1707: "Who has been telling you that God does not want you to be doing what you are presently doing?" (LA 43,2).

¹ In the 17th century, the word *destiner* (to destine) meant "to plan, allocate in advance" (Cf. Cayrou). To stress the part played by God's personal choice in a Brother's vocation and in ensuring his suitability for his employment, De La Salle takes up the word used by St Paul in Ep 1,4-6 & Rm 8,28-30.

² The construction of this sentence shows how the work of the Brother (to acquit himself well in his employment in order to bring up the children well) fits into God's plan for him (to withdraw him from the world in order to dispose him to practise virtue). The quotation that follows is

constructed in a similar fashion.

³ "He has chosen you to do his work" (MR 196,1; Cf. 1 Co 3,9; Jn 6,28; 1 Th 3,2).

⁴ The idea that a vocation confers a name or a title on the Brother is one that is dear to De La Salle. The first duty of the person called is to conform his life and behaviour to it. "To belong to a profession and not to know what it is, not to know even the name that it has, nor what it commits a person to, and what are the basic duties of this state, all this seems to be contrary to common sense and

right reason. And yet this is a situation quite common among Christians" (DA, preface).

⁵ In the sense of "worthy of esteem".

⁶ "True Christians" (MF 79,2; 86,3; 160,3) but also "True disciples of Jesus Christ" (MF 116,2) and "True children of God" (MR 199,3).

⁷ Strangely enough, the words "enseignement" (teaching), "enseigner" (to teach) and "être enseigné" (to be taught) occur 207 times in the Founder's writings, while the word "education" appears only 38 times! However, the two concepts involved are normally expressed together.

⁸ Cf. "The gift of instructing by teaching and exhorting by stimulating" (MR 193,2).

⁹ De La Salle makes a distinction between the gift made by God to a Brother for his own sanctification, and the increase in this same gift given to him for the exercise of his ministry, that is, for the sanctification of the pupils. Cf., for example, MD 43,3.

The word "profession" can have any one of three meanings in the Founder's writings: professional work, procla-

mation of one's faith, commitment by vows of religion. The last meaning seems to be the one intended in this sentence.

¹⁰ Action without zeal is known as "activism".

¹¹ In the sense of "attachment".

¹² That is, low down on the social scale.

¹³ In the sense of "professional work".

¹⁴ The expression "spiritual exercises" occurs only once in the Founder's writings, in reference to St Bernadine (MF 128,3).

¹⁵ The expression "the school runs well" occurs only in De La Salle's correspondence (LA 16,3; 34,18; 49,6; 57,12; 58,20; 75,8). It belongs, therefore, not to his written, but to his spoken language. It has sometimes been interpreted as meaning good organisation in a school, or the good results obtained by the pupils. This interpretation is mistaken. In the thinking of the Founder, a school runs well only when it produces the fruits of Christian life in the hearts of those that attend it.

Complementary themes		Renunciation
Catechism	Hearts (to touch)	Retreat
Christian	Instruction	Reward
Commandments	Love - charity	Rule
Consecration	Ministry	Sacraments
Disciples	Mission	Salvation
God's work	Modesty	School
Duty	Mortification	Silence
Education	Mystery	Sin
Example - Edification	Obedience	Solitude
Exercises	Peace	Spirit of Christianity
Fidelity	Penitent	State
Gentleness	Piety	Truth
Goodness	Poor	Vigilance
Guardian angels	Prayer	Virtues of a teacher
		Zeal

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77. GOD

Summary

1. The context: God in 17th century France.

2. The call of God in the life of J. B. de La Salle

2.1 .His witness and that of his biographers 2.2.Man of God and man for God.

3. For De La Salle, who is God ?

3.1.Preliminary remark 3.2."O great God, small child" 3.3.Similar in everything, completely different 2.4.Living God 3.4.1 ."Spirit of the living God" 3.4.2 "...who acts in you" 3.4.3."...and through you" (MR 195,2,1).

4. Conclusion: Witnessing to God today.

As De La Salle lay on his death-bed, rapidly growing weaker, Brother Barthelemy, who was looking after him, "asked him if he accepted his sufferings with joy. 'Yes', he answered, 'I adore in all things the conduct of God in my regard'. These were his last words" (CL 8,174).

The biographer John Baptist Blain, who gives us this account, was fully aware of the place God occupied in the writings of his hero and, even more so, in his life: God was always at the root of all the choices he made and of the risks he took. This is what the present article will try to explore. Its approach will be a general one, not including the Holy Trinity, however, which can be the topic for another article. This one will concentrate on the only, living, transcendent and acting God.

1. THE CONTEXT: GOD IN 17th CENTURY FRANCE

During the age of Louis XIV,¹ God was an omnipresent reality reflected in the way institutions functioned, in daily life, in the architecture of towns and villages, in the Fine Arts. The writings of the time are filled with such expressions as: "With the help of God" or "If God wills" or "Please God".²

This is reflected also in the dictionaries of the period. They affirm that it is not possible to give a true

definition of God because he is an infinite being and beyond understanding. They add, however, that piety requires that he should be presented, all the same, but in the most perfect way possible. God is seen as the supreme being, unique, infinitely perfect, first cause, first mover, subsisting by himself without beginning or end. "I am who am" (Ex 3,14). He is the living God, who created everything and through whom all

things exist and subsist. He is infinitely powerful, good and merciful. He is sovereign wisdom.³

Contemporary catechisms contain the same notions. They speak of God's being and of his action among men, gathering together his dispersed children into a single people, freeing them from the slavery of sin.⁴ By deduction, these notions lead them to draw up "the duties of a Christian" towards God: knowledge, adoration, respect, obedience, love, gratuitous service...⁵

Some writers of the time defined God in philosophical terms, speaking of the divine essence and of its absolute perfection. Others treated God from a theological point of view and described him as the acting and anthropomorphic God of Revelation. To these two ways of approaching God, that is, through reason and through faith, certain writers chose a third way, through the heart. Even before Blaise Pascal, there was the Capuchin Yves de Paris, who affirmed we knew God as if by "natural instinct"; and that we go to him by the same way we came from him, by love.⁶

For Pierre de Berulle, God acts on us "through grace and love and not justice and punishment". He

works "on our mind and helps it to bear and feel the power and sovereignty of his being over all created beings, by making us experience the closeness of his greatness side-by-side with our insignificance, and our insignificance which cannot encompass his greatness. [...] This divine being, adorable in all his qualities, has qualities which are apparently contradictory. He is infinitely present and infinitely distant. He is infinitely distant and infinitely high and infinitely close to created beings".⁷

Such a view of God, with its corollary, the awareness of the insignificance of human beings and their state as creatures, explains the fundamental role that followers of Berulle attribute in their spirituality to the virtue of religion. As opposed to the "pious humanists" who, by stressing the goodness of God, behave in his regard with great freedom and familiarity, the disciples of Berulle strive to promote the "decorum of the house of God"⁸ expressed through the magnificence of churches and the solemnity of religious ceremonies. They call for respect, reverence and adoration to be a permanent state of soul rather than something expressed through rites or the acts of mental prayer.

2. THE CALL OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF J.B. DE LA SALLE

2.1. His witness and that of his biographers

The life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle can be seen as a rare illustration of God's action in a person and the response of the person to God's action.

We know what a traumatic experience it was for De La Salle to lodge the first schoolmasters in his own house. They are described as being "for the most part unrefined, simple-minded and with little education" (CL 11,352 = MH 0,0,36). This major step was followed by a second and more definitive break: he gave up his family fortune and went to live as a poor person in a poor community. He speaks of these events in a memoir (according to Blain and Bernard) or in a letter to a pious person (according to Maillefer): "God, who conducts all things with wisdom and gentleness, and who is not accustomed to impose his will on people, wishing to make me take complete charge of the schools, did so in an imperceptible manner and over a long period of time, in such a way that one commitment led me to another, without my having foreseen

any of this initially" (CL 10,107). In this text, the Founder says how he sees his life, and recognises the outstanding part played in it by God. He is a God who intervenes in history without, however, diminishing at all the freedom and responsibility of man.

The first biographer, Brother Bernard, gave the following title to his work which has come down to us in an incomplete form: "The admirable conduct of divine Providence in the person of the venerable servant of God, John Baptist de La Salle...". On several occasions, he repeats his conviction that De La Salle led a life "in which divine Providence revealed itself in a special way" (CL 4,4).

Sharing in the mentality of our times, and unlike De La Salle, we like to know secondary causes and to analyse how they are linked. This should not hinder us in examining the mentality of the contemporaries of the Founder of the Christian Schools. In their eyes, De La Salle is part of a great plan inspired by God. God raised him up when his "time" had come. From

his mother's womb, God chose him to render the Church a great service, by establishing the Society of the Christian Schools for the instruction of young people (CL 4,3; CL 6,257). Intervening in his life, God "attracts him to himself. [...] To his joy, he finds himself caught in God's net, like a fish" (CL 4,31).

The grace of God proved to be highly efficacious in him, changing the course of his life and profoundly transforming his person. From one commitment to another, forever on the move, God led him, and not only at the beginning. He makes him undertake what initially he had refused to consider. As Bernard writes: "God draws him to himself without his noticing it. [...] God disposes him, without his realising, to do what is so repugnant to him" (CL 4,31).

God allows various combinations of circumstances to prepare De La Salle to experience situations and exercise functions on which his future reputation will be based: "God, no doubt, allowed this in order to dispose his servant little by little for evangelical perfection" (CL 4,47). God strengthens him so that he can face the attacks which all kinds of enemies will make on him (CL 4,38); God puts him to the test by affliction which accustoms him to bear with patience the sufferings which will subsequently become his daily bread (CL 4, 38f), and which will lead him through the dark nights of the soul which accompanied him throughout his life.

Without ending his work of moulding him according to his preference and taste, the Lord sends him to fulfil the mission he has entrusted to him among the schoolmaster Brothers, to care for children far from salvation and for many other souls who will benefit from his work.

In order that he can accomplish this mission properly, God fills him with "wisdom and prudence", as Nyel recognises (CL 4,67), gives him "the graces and talents necessary", as the Brothers affirm in their letter of 1714 (CL 6,227). God associates him with other people, the Brothers who, together with him, will accomplish the mission. God watches over him, enlightens and inspires him, protects him, blesses his zeal and takes pleasure in seeing his disinterestedness (CL 4,70; CL 6,123).

The biographers are all in agreement regarding the method God used to lead De La Salle forward. They stress two points in particular. First, the fact that God led him on gradually, step by step, without allowing

him to suspect, at least initially, where what he was doing could lead him, or imagine the work and sufferings that would be involved. Secondly, the instruments used by God to involve him in his plans and to urge him on to fulfil them, were his encounters with the men and women God put in his path (CL 4,30 & 69). Seen in the light of faith and discerned through reflection and counsel, these encounters were decisive by giving a concrete form to the "work of God" entrusted to his servant De La Salle, and by consolidating it.

2.2. Man of God and for God

Bernard frequently refers to De La Salle as "the man of God". He could have called him also a man "for God", since he often experienced God's presence in his life, although, at other times, he experienced also his apparent absence (CL 8,96).

His life was a continuous dialogue, with God urging and inspiring, and he responding. If the Lord chooses him and draws him close to himself, it is because he allowed himself to be caught in his net without any resistance, and because, as Bernard says, he took pleasure in this happy necessity (CL 4,31). When God called him, saying: "Leave your country", he responded by leaving his socio-cultural background, giving up his preferences and plans, and becoming a part of the world of the poor. As a part of this world he began working for its salvation. When God sent him, saying: "Go and teach", he accepted being sent and, with discernment and creativity, became a willing instrument in the hands of the Worker (EP 3,0,9). All this was part of an overall and gradual process, marked by a growing awareness and commitment, and the increasingly responsible attitude of one who fears to lose a single soul confided to him by God (CL 6,193), or waste the time God has allotted him (EP 3,0,13).

De La Salle led a life that was radically open to God. God's plan and his commands were his centre of attraction and the ideal he sought to attain. His sole desire was God (CL 7,181); the accomplishment of God's will was the motive for all his actions (CL 6,21).

His own life reflected what he taught his disciples: "To have God as the goal of all that one does, is to do all that one does for the glory of God and solely to please him" (CL 15,81 =R 11,2,14). Blain writes: "God alone was the object of his desires. [...] To please

him, to do his holy will in all things, to procure his glory, to love him and make him loved, this was all that he sought" (CL 8,294).

The same biographer, speaking of De La Salle's relations with God, stresses the following points:

1. His **spirit of religion** which leads him to have a great respect for places and times dedicated to God, to ensure that these holy places were always clean and decorated, and the sacred vestments were rich and beautiful (CL 8,233f). His reverent attitude towards God, the fruit of his spirit of religion, makes it repugnant for him to write of God or the saints in over familiar terms.⁹

2. His **trust in God and his abandonment to divine providence** (CL 8,264f). He waits calmly for the moment chosen by providence (CL 6,129). Maillefer praises "his total submission to the orders of providence", which he has taken as "his rule of conduct" (CL 6,49).

3. His **attraction to God and the things of God**, shown, for example, by his love for mental prayer, his care to maintain himself in the presence of God, his zeal for the glory of the Lord and the acceptance of the sufferings he endures for him (CL 8,270f).

De La Salle's profound prayer expresses the various aspects of this attraction to God and is nourished by them; not that we know much of his personal experience of God in his prayer (CL 7,112). His intimate encounters with the Lord remain a well-guarded secret. The only explicit allusions, which are rare and discreet, that we have from him occur in the *Rules I have imposed upon myself* (CL 10,114 = EP 3) and in the fragments of the *Memoir on the beginnings* (CL 10,105f), which the first biographers have saved for us. Also, we are given an insight into De La Salle's very personal way of speaking to his Lord in the fervent outpourings of his heart in the *Instructions and Prayers* and in the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*.

The thought of God appears to be a fundamental factor in the formation and guidance of his disciples. Having become the confessor of the first teachers (CL 7,178), he seeks to lead them to God. He carefully avoids the trap of concentrating his disciples' attention on himself. "He does not overwhelm them with his own feelings but tries to make them concentrate on God and their mission" (AEP 421).

Although centred on God and uncompromisingly committed to the coming of his kingdom, De La Salle is nonetheless in touch with reality, and it is through this reality that he expresses his attitudes. He sees God's calls in the shortcomings of his teachers, in the needs of his pupils, in the words of the people he meets. It is in concrete reality — the government of the Society, the struggle for power, the administration of schools, the direction of souls — that De La Salle discerns the calls of God. He is a man of God and for God, to the same degree that he is a human being among human beings and for human beings.

This awareness of the world around him makes him discover, in addition to his own vocation, "the mission of his Institute as a practical response to his prayerful consideration of this [...] in relation to God's plan of salvation".¹⁰ This awareness also gives new dynamism to his life which gives it vitality and transforms it into "a spiritual journey of ever increasing faith",¹¹ making it at the same time an undertaking that is permanent yet constantly renewed. It is a permanent undertaking because of its basic options (the absoluteness of God, consecration to God), its ultimate purpose (the furtherance of the glory of God, the accomplishment of his will, and the completion of his work), and its guiding principles and orientations (unity of life, the mission of being a representative and instrument of God). Also it is an undertaking that it constantly renewed, so that it can respond with discernment and creativity to the successive calls of the world (from God in the world), with fidelity to the basic options and ultimate purpose.¹²

3. FOR DE LA SALLE, WHO IS GOD?

3.1. Preliminary remark

De La Salle wrote much about God. Occurring 6,477 times, "God" is the most frequently used word in his writings.¹³ What he communicates to us on this

topic is the fruit of his theological studies, his reading of the sacred authors and spiritual writers, and his familiarity with the lives of the saints. It is a reflection also of his own experience, of his experience of God

shared with his Brother-teachers, and of the action of God that he perceived in the souls which were entrusted to his spiritual direction.

His most systematic — and somewhat school-masterish — view of God can be found in his catechetical works, intended for either pupils or adults, published under the general title of *Duties of a Christian* (DA, DB, DC, GA, PA). In these texts, intended to nourish and produce spiritual growth in pupils and teachers, he speaks in particular of the God-man relationship in a life according to the Spirit (R, L, MD, MF, MR), and teaches how to speak to God in vocal (E, I) and mental (EM) prayer.

And since he teaches that God is present everywhere (CL 14,6 = EM 2,16,1), we find explicit references to God even in writings that are "purely" educational and pedagogical (RB, CE).

3.2. "O great God, little child"¹⁴

As a disciple of Berulle and St Sulpice, De La Salle sees God as the "great God", unique and self-sufficient (CL 14,81 = EM 9,225,2; CL 17,248 & 196 = 16,3,1 & 3,21,1), eternal and infinitely perfect (CL 20,15-16 = DA 102,0,1-3), true, omniscient and omnipresent (CL 19,57 = RB 202,1,155; CL 18,7 = E 2,2; CL 14,43 = EM 4,138,1), infinitely holy and very just (MD 77,1; CL 20,117 = DA 204,0,6). In a word, God is he who is all, who has all and who can do all (CL 17,72 = 11,8,2).

The first cause of all things, God created everything and sustains it (CL 20,15 = DA 102,0,2); on him, the one and sovereign Lord, we depend in all things (MF 90,2; CL 15,66 = R 14,2,2; CL 20,108 = DA 203,0,6). As our focus and our true end, our supreme being and our sole reward (CL 20,91 & 459 = DA 201,1,5 & 404,1,4), already here below, he must be the goal and purpose of all our actions as he will be in the next life (MD 75,3,2).

But this God is also the "little Child", the God who made himself close to us, even familiar, in the Word incarnate, and who revealed himself to us by innumerable ways of being present. The all good and merciful God (MF 123,1), God who is Father, our Father (CL 20,458 = DA 404,1,1), who loves us infinitely, as if through an excess of love (MF 112,1; 123,1; CL 22,155 = DC 42,6,4).

3.3. Similar in everything, completely different

In the best biblical tradition, De La Salle's God has anthropomorphic characteristics which can be perceived and understood by material and sentient man (CL 20,109-110 - DA 203,0,10-11). Very often the actual words of the Bible are used.

Like human beings, he finds some things pleasant others disagreeable (CL 20,x = DA 0,0,18; LI 121,8), things which fill his heart with joy (CL 17,189 = I 35,15,1; CL 22,214 = DC 44,1,1) or which make him sad (CL 15,57 = R 13,6,3); which please or horrify him (CL 14,18 & 22 = EM 2,62,2 & 2,73,3; MD 38,1; LA 33,5), things which irritate him (MD 4,2; CL 15,172 = R 15,8,1; CL 20,258 = DA 304,4,8; LI 122,6) which provoke his indignation, his horror and malediction (CL 20,127, 143,293 & 448 = DA 206,0,7; 210,0,7; 307,2,12 & 403,1,13; CL 14,57 & 77 = EM 6,170 & 8,218,2; CL 17,191 = I 3,17,1) or which cry out for vengeance before God (CL 20,128 & 181 = DA 206,0,13 & 215,0,1).

Like human beings, God is jealous but with a jealousy that is pure love (CL 20,124 = DA 2,2,3) as, for example, of a soul of which he takes possession (CL 17,196 = I 3,21,1; MD 62,3).

There are things such as our defects and imperfections which he suffers with difficulty (CL 17,258 = I 6,13,1). God has desires, plans and intentions (CL 14,117 = EM 17,316; CL 20,377^382 = DA 310,1). Like human beings, he has affection and makes his will known (CL 17,201 = I 3,26,2; CL 20,99 = DA 201,3,3; CL 14,120 = EM 18,320,4; CL 19,43 = RB 113,1,122; MD 75,3,1).

God is like man, but, at the same time, he is so different! God has his specificity. He has his secrets, his mysteries, his hidden plans (MR 199,3). There is a specific way in which God knows things (CL 15,41 = R 11,2,4) and the discernment that God himself makes of things (CL 20,185 = DA 216,1,4). The wisdom of God, which is the interior spirit, remains hidden from men (CL 15,61 = R 13,14,3). It is opposed to the wisdom of the world (MR 194,2). God's wisdom has its own criteria by which to judge and appreciate events, giving more importance to some than to others (CL 15,61 = R 13,16,1), apportioning value to actions according to his own criteria (MD 11,3,1). Opposed to the things of God (CL 20,2 = DA 101,1,1; MR 197,1) there is human behaviour which, in varying degrees,

is conformable to the Spirit of God (LI 70,4) because human beings remain free to respond or not to the call to live according to God (CL 15,66 = R 14,2,1).

Our view of things and our discernment of reality are more or less similar to those of God. To see them as he sees them is the characteristic of an attitude of faith (CL 15,77 = R 11,2,4). To discern them as he discerns them is the sign of Christian prudence (CL 20,185 = DA 216,1,5).

3.4. The living God

3.4.1. "THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD..."

God is more than the sum total of his attributes. He is a living God who reveals himself as such by his actions (CL 19,57 = RB 202,1,155; MR 201,2,1).

He continues to be the creator he has been since the beginning. "His omnipotence [...] reveals itself every day in prodigies of nature and grace" (CL 17,254 = 16,8,1).

Jesus, who knows the Father (Jn 10,5), bears witness to the fact that the Father still acts (Jn 5,17). In imitation of Jesus, De La Salle contemplates him, and calls upon others to do so, as a farmer who cultivates his field, as an architect who builds his house and as the owner of the vineyard who sends out his workers to work in it (MR 193,3; 205,1; 201,1).

He is the lord of history. He "directs all things with wisdom and gentleness" (CL 10,106) and provides for the needs of his creatures. In Lasallian language, God's benevolent direction of history and his loving care for people is called Providence. De La Salle has experienced this in his own life, and he speaks (CL 6,69) and writes of it to his disciples (MD 59,3; 67,3; MF 137,2; 153,3).

While God's action is first of all creative, it is also salvific. His plan from all eternity is that all men should know the truth and be saved (MR 193). When sin threatened the accomplishment of this plan, God revealed that he had not only a heart which wanted to save, but also "a strong hand and an outstretched arm" (Ps 136,12), capable of setting in motion a history of salvation. This history has a high point, which was when the ingenious love of God enabled him to discover an infallible remedy for the ills of humanity, and he sent his Son, delivered him up to death and made him remain among human beings in the Eucharist (CL 21,35f = DB 1,8; MR 201,3; CL 17,246 = I 6,1,1). Even today,

God's will to save is still alive, as is his active ingenuity to ensure that this will finds a response in every human being: "It seems clear, O my God, that you wish to save me, since by the attraction of your grace and the remorse of my conscience, you urge me without ceasing to give myself entirely to you" (CL 17,196 = 13,21,1).

The origin of the Brothers' Institute is to be found in the context of this history of salvation. As the present *Rule* says in article 1, "As he became aware, by God's grace", De La Salle saw that the will of God, that is, that all men should know him and be saved, could not be fulfilled in many children in his days, because many parents "cannot themselves give the instruction necessary for their salvation" (RC 1,4). To remedy such a great misfortune, Providence acted by establishing the Christian Schools so that children could learn in them "to lead good lives, by being instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion and by receiving the education that was appropriate for them" (RC 1,3).

3.4.2. "...WHO ACTS IN YOU..."

In the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* we find a model act of union with Our Lord newly-born in which De La Salle suggests to the person praying to ask God for the following: "Grant, I beg you Lord, that I may participate fully in your holy affections [...] through the movement and effects of your holy grace acting and operating in me [...] that I may be in you and you may be in me truly and efficaciously [...] in such a way that it may be you who live and act in me" (CL 14,84-85 = EM 10,232,4-6).

A prayer like that presupposes faith and the Lasallian experience of the presence of God acting in every human being. De La Salle speaks of this presence in his *Meditations*, especially in those for the feasts of saints. The topic comes up also in the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer, Instructions and prayers* and his letters.

God "does not win over all souls to himself by the same means" (MD 64,2,2). From the outset, he predisposes certain people to follow him. Imperceptibly and as from afar, he prepares others for conversion, whereas others, such as Saul, are transformed "in an instant" (MF 99,1).

God makes his call to conversion heard in everyone's conscience (MD 62,3; CL 17,196 ^ I 3,21,1).

He comes to people in a variety of ways (MF 141) and resides in those who live in charity (MF 113,2). He makes his home in them so that he can converse with them (CL 14,16 & 41 = EM 2,52 & 4,134,1). He takes particular pleasure in those who are pure, who flee from the spirit of the world and even the appearance of sin, and who wish to live detached from all created things (CL 14,22; 30-31; 35; 41 = EM 2,73,2; 3,99f; 3,119; 4,134,1; MD 18,2; MF 111,1; 171,1). He takes possession of a heart empty of creatures and allows himself to be possessed fully by whoever strips himself of all that is terrestrial (MF 179,1; 173,2).

With his own, God "has his own language, which he communicates only to his friends and his confidants" (MD 64,2,1). When he acts in them, God uses his own methods. He does not force wills, but exhorts and urges them (MD 71,3; cf. CL 10,107). It is also his normal practice "to upset the plans of people [...] to make them learn to put their trust in God" (MD 23,3). Sometimes he leaves a soul in a state of spiritual paralysis to test it, to let it feel that it has no power to do good, and to make it understand it can do nothing without him (MD 71,1). On the other hand, in other circumstances, he uses consolations to strengthen the soul in its struggle to do good (MD 18,2).

God's thoughts and actions often seem strange to human beings. He allows his friends to be tempted (MD 17,3)- He has a strange way of honouring them by sending them a cross to bear (MF 121,3). And yet, that is the reward he promises them in this life: "Do you not look upon it [the cross] as a source of mortification and annoyance, instead of receiving it with love and respect as a gift from God and a mark of his favour?" (MF 121,3).

3.4.3. "... AND THROUGH YOU" (MR 195,2)

When God reveals himself, he could communicate directly with his own, but usually he does so through

intermediaries, that is, through the events and persons, which normally serve this purpose, to make visible the salvation of God in everyday life. The Christian educator is one of the persons chosen by God to be his usual instrument of salvation, "his mediator [...] to teach them [the pupils] the means to be saved" (MD 56,3).

MD 37 shows us God bringing to the Christian educator children who have no instruction and are, as it were, abandoned to their devices regarding the salvation of their soul. God is wounded by their urgent need: he entrusts these children to the care of a teacher so that he can give them the spirit of Christianity, teach them to be pious, and bring them up according to the maxims of the Gospel. For this purpose, he wants the teacher to pray for them, asking God to give them all they need to save their souls.

In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, De La Salle speaks even more explicitly of God's efforts to bring salvation to all. God enlightens the heart of those he has chosen to carry his salvation to those who are far from it. He accomplishes his "work" through the intermediary of his "ministers". The love of God urges his ministers to work zealously to make the young people entrusted to their care enter into the Covenant God has made with human beings. God, then, inspires and accompanies the Christian teacher who commits himself to carry out his plan of salvation for poor children.

One cannot reflect on the MR, nor on the spiritual and apostolic life journey of De La Salle, without seeing a parallel between the work of the Christian teacher and "the conduct of divine Providence". In his plan of salvation, God chooses the Christian educator to accomplish his work by exercising his ministry, which is holy. He entrusts him with the care of his children (MR 193,3; 201,1; MD 2,1; MF 133,2). He accompanies him in his mission and enlightens him, showering him with gifts and blessing him with talents and graces for his service (MR 193,1; 205,1-2).

4. CONCLUSION: WITNESSING TO GOD TODAY

For all those, and especially teachers, who find inspiration in the search for God undertaken by John Baptist de La Salle, we offer a few suggestions:

1. Dare to speak of God. In a world which has mistaken ideas about him or denies his existence, be a witness to the faith in word and action: "The first

truth we must believe is that there is a God and that there is only one God" (CL 20,15 - DA 102,0,1).

2. In a world in love with action, relate everything to God. Believe that there exists a first cause of our actions (MF 90,3) and a Lord of history who makes us creators with him, entrusting the accomplishment of his work to us.

3. Pray to God. In a world in which people, taught by their failures, seek, even to the point of anguish, to find meaning in their lives, discover the One who speaks in the depths of our being and experience the joy which "consists in being attached only to him" (MF 90,2,1).

4. Root yourself in God. In a world in which people easily fall prey to "entertainment", enjoy the interior presence of a God that is near (MF 175,1) and who takes pleasure in speaking to each one alone (MF 171,1).

5. Embody God. In a world in which often people hate one another, let it be seen that God inspires believers "to love the poor" (CL 20,172 = DA 214,2,3).

In this way, those who fight for justice will know that the God of the Covenant goes before them and accompanies them (MR 199,3) and that he is the protector of the weak (MD 37,3).

¹ BLUCHE, F., *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 1990, p. 475f.

² *Idem*, p. 479.

³ FURETIÈRE, A., *Dictionnaire Universel*.

⁴ *Catéchisme du Concile de Trente*, Paris, E. Savoy, 1736, p. 411.

⁵ *Catéchisme du Diocèse de Troyes*, Troyes, P. Michelin, 1733, p. 58 & 182. Bus, C. de, *Instructions familières sur les quatre panics du catéchisme romain*, Paris, Naufest, 1867, II, 29. MESNARD, *Catéchisme du Diocèse de Nantes*, Nantes, M. Mareschal, 1689, p. 199, p. 341., p. 348, p. 352. FLEURY, CL, *Catéchisme historique*, Paris, P. Auboin & P. Emery, 1686, p. 104. *Catéchisme du Concile de Trente*, p. 412f.

⁶ BREMOND, H., *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, Paris, Bloud et Gay, 1923, vol. I, p. 487-496.

⁷ BÉRULLE, P. de, *Letter 120*, 1644 edition.

⁸ AMELOTE, quoted by BREMOND, vol. III, p. 36.

⁹ Cf. RODRIGUE, J.G., *Contribution à l'étude des sources des MF*, Rome, 1988, (CL 47), p. 247. De La Salle, referring to the life of St Bernadine of Siena, writes more formally than the author from whom he is borrowing.

¹⁰ *FSC Rule*, Rome, 1987, art. 11.

¹¹ *Idem*, art. 81.

¹² Cf. CL 10,114f = EP3,0,2f.

¹³ Cf. *Vocabulaire lasallien*, vol. II, p. 205-339.

¹⁴ CL 14,74 = EM 8,214,3.

Complementary themes

Abandonment
Conduct
Duty - Obligation

God's role
God's work
Imitation of Christ

Incarnation
Ministry
Prayer

Br Edgard HENGEMULE

78. GRATUITY

Summary

1. Gratuitous schools in 17th century France.

2. Gratuity "essential for the Institute" (RC 7,1).

3. Why gratuity?

3.1. Human and social reasons 3.2. Theological and pastoral reasons 3.3. Interior or spiritual dimensions of gratuity.

4. The Founder's struggle for gratuity (1683-1705)

5. Gratuity throughout three hundred years of history

5.1. The petition, the Bull of Approbation and the Rules of 1726 5.2. Gradual evolution (1726-1848) 5.3. The Institute's conflict with centralised government (1848-1901) 5.4. The Institute receives no State help (1901-1966) 5.5. After Vatican II.

"The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made to keep schools gratuitously" (RC 1,1). "The Brothers will keep schools gratuitously everywhere and this is essential for their Institute" (RC 7,1). These two articles of the Rules of 1718 are explicit. They affirm the importance of gratuity in St John Baptist de La Salle 's approach to education, even if the words "gratuity" and "gratuitously" appear infrequently in his written work (20 or so times). The same thing can be said about "association" and "stability" which, like "gratuity" are fundamental concepts in the thinking and work of the Founder of the Brothers.

To appreciate properly the role and meaning of gratuity in the thinking of De La Salle, it would be useful to glance briefly at the historical context of the first "Christian and gratuitous schools".

1. GRATUITOUS SCHOOLS IN 17th CENTURY FRANCE

We should not think of gratuity in schools as a feature that is exclusively Lasallian. There were certain colleges which taught the humanities, colleges run by the Jesuits and Oratorians, for example, which offered free education to their pupils. Their intake, it should be said, was mainly from better-off and more cultured sections of society.

There were also the "little schools" which were closer in nature to those of the Brothers:

- There were the "free day schools" set up next to women's convents which ran parallel fee-paying boarding schools. There was a great increase in the number of these schools for girls in the 17th century as more and more women's congregations were founded.

- There were also the "charity schools", opened by parish priests for the children of families whose names were listed in the Poor Register. They constituted one

of the visible signs of the concern of the Church and of society as a whole for the less well-off social classes of the day. To this we can add the schools that were run in certain general hospitals. These latter institutions had been created to confine vagabonds and so diminish the widespread begging that existed. Children who attended these schools were among the most underprivileged in society.

Because the first schools set up by De La Salle resembled these charity schools so much, the first biographers called them the "Christian and gratuitous schools". Later on, they began to call them "Christian schools", just as the Founder does in all his writings. Gratuity continued to be practised in them, and was the cause of much conflict with the teachers of the Little Schools and the writing masters.

One can see, therefore, that the work of De La Salle and the Brothers was part of a vast ecclesial and social movement born of a new awareness in society of its duty to help the poor. This awareness was particularly widespread in the second half of the 17th century. It did not restrict its concern simply to physical needs — food, clothing, housing — but to moral needs also.

For more than ten centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Church had been responsible for the creation of schools, colleges and universities, but it had not concerned itself with the education of the children of the common people. From the 16th century onwards, the situation began to change slowly but steadily, and De La Salle was part of this whole movement.

2. GRATUITY "ESSENTIAL FOR THE INSTITUTE" (RC 7,1)

Blain begins his biography of De La Salle by saying a few words about De La Salle's approach to education. He says the following in his "Discourse on the institution of [...] Christian and gratuitous schools":

"By SCHOOLS should be understood places where young people go to learn how to read, write and count, for a fee. By CHRISTIAN AND GRATUITOUS SCHOOLS should be understood places where they go to acquire Christian instruction and a holy education for no payment. The former, by comparison with the latter, should be considered profane and secular, because children go there to receive a fairly indifferent sort of profane instruction, of no importance and not in any way necessary for salvation. It is not charity but gain which opens them and attracts. Those who have no money to give to the masters and mistresses who teach there will find the doors closed."

"In the second, reading, writing and arithmetic are taught, and the lessons are free. The only aim is the interest of the children, but that is not all. This sort of instruction is considered as a bait which leads on to more important and necessary instruction."

"Gratuitous schools are opened to teach the truths of salvation and the principles of religion to the boys and girls who come to learn to read, write and count. This last kind of instruction is subordinate to the first, but it is the first kind which interests the teachers and

is considered the most important. Consequently, what has been said in praise of the holiness, excellence, need and benefits of Christian doctrine can be applied only to the gratuitous schools" (CL 7,34).

To make his point, the biographer tends to minimise the importance given to the learning of secular subjects in the Brothers' schools. This was not the way the Founder saw things. It is sufficient to refer to the numerous instances where he insists on the need for teachers to be competent, as for example, in the *Conduct of Schools*. All the same, the text we quoted serves to highlight the fundamental criterion of gratuity in the schools which had been opened to "teach the truths of salvation and the principles of religion".

From the very beginning, in Rheims, the Brothers' schools had been gratuitous. When De La Salle agreed in 1688 to take over a school in Paris in the parish of St Sulpice, it was a "charity school" and consequently, gratuitous. But here, as in Rheims, the Brothers set aside one of the principles applied in this kind of school: instead of accepting only the children of parents listed in the "Poor Register", they took in also children who were not poor, the sons of artisans or of workers with fixed jobs. They did this in response to parents who were very impressed by the organisation and efficiency of their schools.

De La Salle and the Brothers, therefore, ran schools intended and organised for poor children, but some

better-off families took advantage of them also. They too did not pay fees.

As the plan for organising the *Society of the Christian Schools* took shape, the idea of gratuity was strengthened and refined. This is reflected in De La Salle's various writings. In the *Memoir on the Habit*, written in about 1690, we read: "In this community, the Brothers are committed to keeping schools gratuitously [...] and to teaching catechism every day, even on Sundays and feasts" (CL 11,349 = MH 0,0,3).

The 1694 vows formula summarises the purpose

of the Institute when it says: "to keep together and by association gratuitous schools" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,3).

The *Collection of various short treatises* (1711) includes a section entitled: "Ten commandments which the Brothers of the Christian Schools must always have in their minds to meditate on, and in their hearts to practise" (CL 15,4 = R 3). The third of these commandments reads as follows:

"You will teach the children
very well and gratuitously".

3. WHY GRATUITY?

The biographer Blain can help us (CL 8,36f) to understand the reasons which led De La Salle to opt for gratuitous teaching and to insist on it.

By resuming Blain's main points and, especially, by referring to the Founder's writings, we find that the choice of gratuity seems to be based on three sets of reasons.

3.1. Human and social reasons

De La Salle wanted gratuitous schools to make it possible for poor young people to obtain instruction. This was a priority for him and he made it a reality. Among the few documents that have been discovered in archives, there are some which record the investigations made in response to complaints raised by the teachers of the Little Schools. These documents show that about 90% of the Brothers' pupils in Dijon, for example, came from poor families. The priority given to the poor did not mean that the few pupils who could pay were excluded. The Founder did not want "to impose limits on the charity" of the founders and benefactors.

The refusal to make a distinction between the poor and the less poor made it possible to avoid constant disputes and dishonest quibbling. The cyclic nature of the economy caused fluctuation in the situation of families. Unscrupulous persons could have taken advantage of this to contest decisions, and this would have disturbed the schools and prevented the Brothers from working in peace and efficiently. No sure

and permanent criteria existed to distinguish between rich and poor.

Blain insists also on De La Salle's and the Brothers' refusal to investigate: "Who would have had the right to make an inventory of the possessions of a child's parents, to prove they were poor or rich?" (CL 8,36). Because the Brothers did not exclude anyone, this sensitive question did not arise.

And in any case, what good would it have done for competent and non fee-charging teachers to have sent off their better-off pupils to fee-charging and, what is more, less competent teachers?

The reasons given above are quite understandable if they are seen against the background of the socio-economic and cultural situation of the poor of those days. De La Salle, however, was driven by motives which, in his eyes, were much more powerful and of a theological, pastoral and spiritual nature.

3.2. Theological and pastoral reasons

In his catechetical writings (DA & DB), De La Salle recalls that both grace and salvation are gratuitous. The preface of the second part of DA, entitled: On the means to acquit oneself well of one's duties to God, teaches that "grace in general is a supernatural quality, which God puts in our soul, and which he gives us gratuitously, to help us attain our salvation" (CL 20,194 = DA 300,0,2). We find also: "It is God alone who justifies us gratuitously and solely because of his goodness" (CL 20,195 = DA 300,0,4; cf. CL 21,140f = DB 3,0,3f).

An interesting comparison can be made between the thinking of the Founder and the closely-argued article on *Gratuité* in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* by Paul Agaesse, 1967. As the whole article is too long to be included here, we give simply its plan:

1. The gratuity of God
 - The mystery of gratuity.
 - The scope of gratuity
2. The gratuity of a person's love
 - For God
 - For others

To this theocentric view De La Salle adds a pastoral dimension the basis for which, as is often the case, he finds in St Paul. A very explicit text in this connection is in the 15th MR: "With joy, then, say as he does, that the greatest cause of your consolation in this life is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear it" (MR 207,2 quoting 1 Cor 9,18).

It is, in fact, this obligation to teach the Gospel gratuitously to everyone that inspires De La Salle and which is the basis of the gratuity of his schools whose essential aim is "to announce the Gospel to the poor". Hence the words of the second MR: "God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools, where the teaching is offered free of charge and entirely for the glory of God. [...] Thank God that he has had the goodness to call upon you to procure such an important advantage for children. Be faithful and exact to do this without any payment, so that you can say with St Paul: "The source of my consolation is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear me" (MR 194,1 quoting 1 Cor 9,18).

3.3. Interior or spiritual dimensions of gratuity

When the Founder speaks to the Brothers of gratuity, he does not restrict himself to its financial aspect. In any case, the Brothers received no personal payment for their work. The founders of the various schools paid the agreed sum directly to the *Society* or its representatives. In this way, the Brothers, both individually and as a community, lived in poverty without making the vow. De La Salle would urge them to look beyond the level of material and financial gratuity and discover

spiritual motives. This is what we call "interior gratuity", which has at least four aspects.

1. Personal material gratuity, mentioned in the *Common Rules* and in various passages in the *Meditations*. For example, the Brothers were not to take anything from the pupils (RC 7,12), nor accept anything from their parents (RC 7,11). "Have you received anything from your pupils? You know that this is by no means allowed. If you fell into such faults your school would no longer be a free (gratuite) school, even were you only to receive some snuff. Snuff is not allowed [...] and your teaching must be gratuitous; this is essential to your Institute" (MF 92,3). "You know, moreover, that you are vowed to teach schools gratuitously, and to live on bread alone rather than receive any remuneration" (MF 153,3).

2. Gratuity in relationships. Various texts of the Founder invite the Brothers to love all their pupils without preferring any particular one, but also to have a preferential love for the poor, who are less attractive and sometimes repulsive. They are to act towards them disinterestedly, like "elder brothers", in imitation of Christ (Cf. CL 7,241; MF 86,2f and the article in the present volume by A. Botana entitled *Imitation of Christ*).

3. Affective gratuity. The love the Brothers have for their pupils must be disinterested. They are encouraged not to expect signs of gratitude from them. Theirs is the gratuity of the true educator who does not work for his own satisfaction, but always has the interests of the child at the forefront of his mind, and makes them the inspiration of his efforts (RC 7,13f).

4. Spiritual gratuity. We could quote here many instances in the writings of De La Salle where he invites the Brothers "to win over the hearts" of the pupils, not for their own personal satisfaction, but as a means of leading them to God in Jesus Christ, so that they can be "touched" by the Holy Spirit. Such is the disinterestedness of the apostle and his gratuitous ministry. Finance does not come into this: it is a call to exercise gratuitously the ministry of evangelisation through the education of young people.

While De La Salle was still alive, it was possible to associate spiritual freedom and financial gratuity. In the course of the history of the Institute, this coherence, born of a Christian climate, proved untenable in modern liberalised societies.

4. THE FOUNDER'S STRUGGLE FOR GRATUITY (1683 1705)

We know what a personal crisis it was for the Founder to be challenged by the teachers who were worried about their future, and how, in 1683, he sought the advice of Fr Nicolas Barre, who also had started up some schools for poor children. Among other things, he asked whether he should use his personal fortune to endow his schools: at the time, this was the usual way of ensuring the continued existence of charitable institutions.

The answer given by the Minim, based on a quotation from the Gospel, was to refuse all material security and to put himself entirely into the hands of divine Providence. This incident seems to show that, even at this date, De La Salle had already opted for gratuity in schools. He had not yet found, however, the means to guarantee their future and that of the teachers.

He decided, therefore, that where future foundations were concerned, he would rely on the persons who asked him to open schools, making the Brothers strictly dependent on the founders, whether these were individuals or local institutions. A change of attitude on their part could compromise the future of the school, something that happened in Paris, Chartres and Marseilles in the lifetime of the Founder, and in various other towns in the 18th century.

By not respecting the normal way charity schools

were run, the first Brothers, objectively speaking, harmed the interests of the "writing masters" and the teachers of the "little schools", who earned their living by their teaching, and were paid by the parents of the pupils. Their protests against the Brothers' schools in Dijon, Chartres and especially in Paris, were understandable. In Paris, the teachers of the "little schools" had the support of the Precentor, who was appointed by the archbishop. The writing masters were backed by their guild which jealously protected its interests.

All this, then, was at the root of the problems encountered by the Brothers and reported by De La Salle's biographers. In Paris, the first problems arose in 1690 and came to a head in 1704 and 1705 with a series of complaints, confiscations, court cases and sentences. The subsequent Clement Affair was of a different nature. It is not our intention to describe these events: we wish simply to highlight the attitude of De La Salle and the Brothers in these difficult circumstances. What is particularly striking is their conviction that "gratuity is essential" for their Institute. It is a conviction that leads them to leave themselves open to all these troubles and to suffer them, without ever changing their minds. These events were only the prelude to a struggle to maintain gratuity in schools which would occupy the Institute for two centuries.

5. GRATUITY THROUGHOUT THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF HISTORY

5.1. The petition, the Bull of Approbation and the Rules of 1726

After the death of the Founder, Brothers Barthelemy and Timothee, the first superior generals, set the process in motion to obtain the recognition of the Brothers' Institute by the Holy See.¹

According to Br Maurice Auguste (CL 11), the Brothers sent at least two "petitions" to Rome, requesting the recognition of their Institute. The first was sent in 1721, but the text has not come down to us.² It was only with the second letter, which was sent the following year, that the process in Rome really began. What was said about gratuity in the "Rouen Memoir", on which the first petition was possibly based, added

nothing to what had always appeared in previous documents of the young Institute, namely, its desire to teach the poor gratuitously, and the Brothers' commitment not to accept any remuneration from the parents of their pupils. The memoir describes also the modest and strictly communal lifestyle of the Brothers. The desire to teach without receiving remuneration from parents is linked with the personal commitment by vow that the Brothers are invited to pronounce. At the time this included a vow of association.³

The inclusion of the vow "to teach gratuitously" in the 1722 petition, on which Pope Benedict XIII's Bull of Approbation was based, was not the work of the Holy See. It was the Brothers who chose to in-

elude it, believing that their association had its main raison d'être in teaching gratuitously. The formula may have changed, but the intention remained the same.⁴

But the Bull *In Apostolicae*, while approving what the Brothers had done, unwittingly introduced an ambiguity which becomes clear when we compare paragraphs 5 & 9.

"Fifthly: that the said Brothers **teach children gratuitously** and do not accept either money or presents offered by the pupils or their parents."

"Ninthly: that the Brothers should take the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, stability in the said Institute, and **to teach the poor gratuitously**".

This shift from children in general to only poor children was the cause of much dispute and wrangling in the 18th century between the Institute of the Brothers and the teachers of the Little Schools and certain municipalities. It is clear that the Brothers continued to do what they had done in De La Salle's lifetime, and that they understood the Bull in terms of their established practice. Moreover, the formula of vows, modified in 1726, read as follows : "That is why, I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience, stability in the said Society, and to teach gratuitously, conformably to the Bull of Approbation of our Holy Father the Pope Benedict XIII" (RC, 1726, ch. XVII).

We find the following explanation in chapter XVIII of the 1726 Common Rules, entitled "The Obligation of the Vows": "By the vow of teaching gratuitously and keeping schools by association, the Brother promises to take the greatest care to instruct the children well and give them a Christian education; to use the time well that is set aside for this; not to demand or receive anything from the pupils or their parents as remuneration, either as a present or for whatever other reason; not to use the parents of the pupils to do some work, in the hope that they will do it without asking for payment".

5.2. Gradual evolution (1726-1848)

Throughout these centuries, the Brothers showed their determination to remain faithful to gratuitous

teaching. However, there were some adaptations, especially towards the end of this period.

The 1787 and 1822 General Chapters reaffirmed the obligation not to receive anything from the pupils or their parents, as well as the obligation to provide ink free, as indicated in the *Common Rules*.⁵

At the end of the 18th century, the Institute, attacked on all sides, asked some canon lawyers from the Sorbonne for an interpretation of the meaning of paragraphs 5 and 9 of the Bull of Approbation. Their question was: Must the Brothers teach all their pupils gratuitously, or can they restrict gratuitous teaching to only poor pupils? The canon lawyers were mostly of the opinion that gratuity applied to all the pupils.

After the Revolution, primary schools became the monopoly of town councils. Many towns entrusted their schools to the Brothers, who accepted on the express condition that the schools were to be gratuitous. Then, after 1830, a liberal-based anticlericalism spread through French society. It was clear that the intention was to limit the role of the Church in education in favour of non-denominational schools. Apart from a few exceptions, the bishops, who wanted their seminaries to be left out of the dispute, did not involve themselves in the question of gratuity in State primary schools.

The law of June 28th 1833, drawn up by François Guizot, the Minister of Education, opened up a new era.⁶ Primary schools were the responsibility of town councils, but part of the teachers' pay came from a monthly contribution from parents. The amount of this payment was fixed by the town council. Only the poor were exempt.⁷ The Superior General, Brother Anaclet, tried to interpret and apply this law in a way that was compatible with the vow of gratuity. His approach was to negotiate with town councils, and threaten to withdraw the Brothers from places where gratuity was not maintained. He refused to consider any increase in the salaries of the Brothers based on the monthly contribution, and obliged the parents of pupils to obtain a certificate of poverty. This attitude on the part of the Institute, which was very much criticised, made it possible to maintain almost everywhere a parity of treatment for the Brothers' pupils.

5.3. The Institute's conflict with centralised government (1848-1901)

After the 1848 Revolution, the law of March 15th 1850 and the decree dated December 31st 1853 reaffirmed the obligation of non-poor parents to pay, saying it was a means necessary for the expansion of public education. The Institute was obliged to revise its traditional position on gratuity. It was the task of the 1854 General Chapter to examine the situation of the 395 Brothers' schools in France that were affected by these laws.

After deciding to set aside 120,000 francs to help the communities whose income was insufficient to enable the Brothers to live with some dignity, the chapter suggested a possible compromise, saying, for example, that the Brothers should be allowed to take in pupils as paying boarders or day boarders, so that tuition fees need not be paid. The chapter finally considered asking the Holy See for a dispensation from the vow of gratuity for 3 years in France and 10 years in America, as a way of regularising the de facto situation of numerous schools. As regards America, the chapter advocated teaching the poor in separate classrooms, where this was possible.⁸

The next General Chapter, in 1858, was unable to make any progress regarding this question, and disguised its embarrassment by leaving the matter, couched in general terms, to the care of the Superior General, Brother Philippe, and his council.⁹

The dispute between the Institute and the French Government came to a head in 1861. On May 27th, a circular from the Ministry of Education sent to all prefects, recalled the obligation to enforce the following legal requirements: gratuity of primary education for children from poor families, and the obligation of all the others to pay, unless the town council voted to include a corresponding amount in the town budget. A few days later, on June 10th 1861, the Superior General of the Brothers received a letter from the Minister, Gustave Rouland, asking him to comply. In the case of non-compliance, the Brothers would be excluded from State schools.

The fight to maintain gratuity had now moved from the town council level to that of the State. It was no longer possible to maintain an intransigent attitude if the Institute wished to pursue its apostolate among the working classes in France. Three months later, a

General Chapter was held in Paris. It agreed, given the approbation of the Holy See,¹⁰ to limit gratuitous teaching solely to poor pupils for as long as the current situation persisted. While waiting for this approbation, the Superior General was asked to maintain a passive attitude. By a rescript dated November 15th 1861, Rome approved the decision of the recent chapter.¹¹

While the rescript solved a specific problem, it was not the Holy See's intention to give a general interpretation of the "vow of teaching gratuitously", which continued to be considered by the Institute as requiring total gratuity. The rescript endorsed the passive attitude of the Brothers' congregation towards the public authorities so long as the circumstances described persisted.

5.4. The Institute receives no State help (1901-1966)

In 1901, the French parliament was on the point of passing a new and more restrictive law regarding religious congregations. It was in this context that the Superior General, Br Gabriel Marie, asked the Holy See for a more explicit interpretation of the "vow of teaching the poor gratuitously". He suggested that two interpretations were possible. The first involved making a distinction between two aspects of the vow: it obliged the Brothers to teach only the poor, and the teaching given had to be absolutely gratuitous. This would mean returning to complete gratuity, in schools teaching only poor children. The second interpretation would mean that the vow obliged the Brothers to give free teaching to the poor, but did not prevent them from accepting paying pupils.

The Holy See responded to the Superior's request by a rescript dated February 12th 1901. The second interpretation was endorsed. The Brothers made the "vow of teaching the poor gratuitously", but for the individual Brother, the vow of gratuity was subordinated to the vow of obedience. The vow of teaching the poor gratuitously affected the Institute as a body, but it did not apply in the case of Brothers ordered by obedience to teach children from well-off backgrounds.¹²

This rescript made it possible to generalise the practice of remuneration which had started in the Institute in 1861, and which involved accepting fees in Brothers' schools except in the case of the poorest pupils.

This became general practice in France (except in schools under the control of private donors) as well in countries where the Brothers had recently arrived and ran only private schools.

5.5. After Vatican II.

In 1966, the General Chapter, determined to adapt the Institute to the modern world and to root it firmly in the charism of St John Baptist de La Salle, considered once again the question: How can we serve the poor?

The Rules were completely rewritten for the first time since the beginning of the Institute.¹³ The General Chapter replaced the vow of "teaching the poor gratuitously" by that of the "educational service of the poor".

From then onwards, the *Rules and Constitutions*

and the *Declaration* also would consider the educational service of the poor as an integral part of the purpose of the Institute and, consequently, of the personal vocation of each Brother.¹⁴

This chapter had a much broader understanding of the educational service of the poor than revealed simply by an analysis of material conditions: it took into account historical and sociological factors as well. It called upon local bodies as well as individual Brothers to take steps that would enable the Institute to go to the poor.

The 1986 General Chapter, in its turn, incorporated the idea of association into the educational service of the poor,¹⁵ by identifying it closely with the spirit that inspired the Founder when he established the society, that is, a school for the service of the poor, for the purpose of ensuring their human and Christian development.¹⁶

The preferential option for the poor was one of the points insisted upon by the General Chapters of 1966 and 1986, whose task it was to rewrite the Brothers' Rule after the Vatican II Council. While complete gratuity in schools can be justified in certain specific cases, the implications of this questions have changed considerably and can no longer be understood in the form they had in the early days of the Institute.

It is less important to know whether the parents pay or not a part of the school fees, than to adapt schools to the needs of the very poor, to prepare young people for useful jobs, to enable everyone to have access to learning, to teach rich and poor to promote justice. The preferential option for the poor stimulates the Brothers and like-minded persons who work with them to develop the spiritual and community dimensions of gratuity, so as to be, with the help of God, the kind of educators the poor need.

¹ Mgr de Rohan, son of the Prince de Soubisc, and his co-worker, the Abbé Jean Vivant, who were both familiar with the Roman correspondence, were the intermediaries. It seems that personal influence produced no results. On advice from Jean Vivant, normal procedures were followed, and contact was made with the Dataria in Rome, through the services of a French representative at the Holy See.

² That year, Jean Vivant was in Rome. It is presumed that this petition was similar to the *Rouen Memoir* written the same year and thanks to which State recognition was obtained.

³ For more information see CL 11,191-193, and especially note 5, p. 191.

⁴ In its 5th point, the petition says: "Quod ipsi Fratres

pueros educant neque pecuniam aut munera a discipulis vel eorum parentibus oblata accipiant".

The 9th point says: "Quod vota fratrum sint castitatis, paupertatis, obedientie et permanentie in dicto Instituto necnon pauperes gratis edocendi eaque simplicia".

The text of the Bull which corresponds to the last point reads as follows: "Mono. Quod vota Fratrum sint castitatis, paupertatis, obedientie et permanentie in dicto Instituto nec non pauperes gratis edocendi cum hoc tamen quod eosdem Fratres a votis simplicibus".

⁵ The 1787 Chapter reaffirms the obligation to refuse presents and free services from the parents of pupils. The 1822 Chapter repeats that remuneration for teaching cannot be accepted nor, *a fortiori*, demanded.

⁶ G. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes*, vol. V, p. 81.

⁷ *Idem*, vol. V, pp. 93-94.

⁸ AMG, 1854 General Chapter Report, p. 261-266.

⁹ AMG, 1858 General chapter Report, p. 312.

¹⁰ AMG, 1861 General Chapter Report, p. 350f. Here is an extract from the decisions (p. 385):

“Article 1. The Brothers will conform to the decisions of the Minister's circular of May 27th 1861 concerning school fees [...]. They will therefore submit a list of pupils to the authorities requiring it; but they will refrain from any direct and personal intervention in the imposition and levying of the said school fees [...].”

Article 2. The following dubia will be submitted to our Holy Father the Pope, begging him to be pleased to define them by his apostolic authority: Firstly. May the Brothers of our Institute, without violating their vow of teaching the poor free of charge, continue to run public schools in which the local authorities will demand and levy to their profit the school fees of children who are not poor? Secondly. May the Superior General accept, in the name of the Institute, the running of new schools offered to him by the local authorities and in which, while the poor were admitted free of charge, school fees would be levied on those children considered rich [...].?

¹¹ The rescript of 1861 simply says: "His Holiness deigns to approve and confirm the above-stated resolution of the General Chapter". (The French translation in the General Chapter report, AMG,186), p. 393 runs: "Sa Sainteté a daigné approuver et confirmer la resolution sus-énoncée du chapitre général").

¹² This is the very concisely written text of the rescript signed on February 12th 1901 by Cardinal Gotti, the Prefect: "Sacra Congregatio [...] Cardinalium negotiis et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium prorsus, omnibus mature perpensis, super prtemissis respondendum censuit prout respondet: ad primum negative, ad secundum affirmative" (Quoted in Circular 109, December 25th 1901, p. 99).

¹³ “The Brothers make simple and perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, educational service of the poor and fidelity to the Institute” (RC 1967, 4,1). “They will often examine themselves individually and as a community regarding their effective fidelity to the spirit and practice of the educational service of the poor” (RC, 1967, 8,2).

¹⁴ "The vocation of the Brothers consists in a total gift to God, directed towards the educational service of the poor. The Brothers make it their personal responsibility to pursue the aims of their congregation" (RC 1967, 8,a).

"In his educational work, he always has in view the service of the poor. He goes by preference to those who lack possessions, talents and affection, because they represent the essential reason for his mission. When obedience calls for it, he goes also to the children of well-off families, going to them also because everyone is poor in the sight of God, and he who recognises this wins the Kingdom" (RC 1967, 8,c).

"By vowing themselves to the educational service of the poor, the Brothers declare that they are all co-responsible for pursuing the purpose of the Institute by the choice and character of their establishments" (RC 1967, 8,1).

The text of the Declaration has thought-provoking things to say about the educational service of the poor: "The General Chapter emphasises that the apostolate with the poor is an integral part of the finality of the Institute. This orientation should be kept in mind whenever there is question of a new foundation, or the evaluation of an institution already in existence, or the planning of the formation that will be provided for the young Brothers" (Declaration 28,2).

¹⁵ "Religious consecration establishes an intimate communion between the person of each Brother and that of Jesus Christ. This consecration is expressed by vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability in the Institute" (Rule, 1986, 24).

¹⁶ "By the vow of association for the service of the poor through education, the Brothers commit themselves, as the Founder did, to conduct schools or other centres of Christian education that are accessible to the poor. At the same time, they strive to develop educational methods that promote above all the social betterment of ordinary classes of people" (Rule, 1986, 39).

"Their preferential option in favour of the poor, continually enlightened by a view of faith, helps the Brothers to recognise the inequalities to which society gives rise. In their desire to make it possible for poor people to live with dignity and to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Brothers show genuine creativity in responding to these new needs" (Rule 1986, 41).

Complementary themes

Artisans	Incarnation	Poor
God's work	Justice	Pupil-teacher relationship
Hearts (to touch)	Ministry	Renunciation - Detachment
Imitation of Christ	Mortification	Reward of the Teacher
		School

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79. HUMILITY

Summary

1. The "deep humility of M. de La Salle" (CL 8,402).

2. Humility as perceived at the time

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5. In the letters of "the humble priest" (CL 8,241).

People move easily from exaggerated self-esteem to self-contempt. For Christians, a calm self-acceptance can result only from love received disinterestedly, because love is humble. Humility is one of the ascetic forms it takes and it is one of the most demanding. St John Baptist de La Salle follows the ascetic tradition of the Church strictly, except where he insists on the apostolic humility of conformity.

1. THE "DEEP HUMILITY OF M. DE LA SALLE" (CL 8,402)

Not only did De La Salle preach humility, but he also practised it. His biographers give frequent examples of this (CL 10,189f). John Baptist Blain devotes a long section to the "deep humility of M. de La Salle" (CL 8,402f). One section bears the following heading: "Poverty and mental prayer earned him great insight regarding self-knowledge". A single quotation is sufficient to give us an out-

line of our subject: "On those occasions, he would say to those who knew of the bad treatment he was receiving and who had come to commiserate with him: 'Do you not know that we are destined to be despised and persecuted? It is something each one must accept when he enters God's service'. Then he would add: 'But what happiness to suffer something for the one who suffered so much for us" (CL8,419).

2. HUMILITY AS PERCEIVED AT THE TIME

2.1. The Trévoux dictionary

It is perhaps interesting to note that this famous dictionary, which came out in the year of the Founder's death, was produced by the Jesuits. It gives two definitions of the word "humility". The first seems to be based on natural morality, an idea which came up regularly during the 18th century, and the second on Christian spirituality:

1. "Virtue opposed to pride and conducive to submission, to abasement before our superiors and to those to whom we must give honour and show respect".
2. "Among Christians, this is the name given to an interior virtue which makes them consider themselves as nothing before God, which makes them endure insults, indignity and persecution without impatience or complaints".

This last meaning is well illustrated by a quotation from Blaise Pascal, referring to the word "humble": "St Augustine states that redemption had to come through humility, so that man, who had fallen at the urging of a proud angel, could rise again through the help of a humble mediator who would inspire him with humility".

2.2. Spiritual writers¹

St Augustine thinks that humility does not consist in a systematic contempt of self. It stems rather from a deep awareness of our place as human beings and

makes us see ourselves as we are in order to make us open to God's action. The mystery of Christian life consists in voluntary abasement with the incarnate Word, who humbled himself to the extent of dying on the cross, and who, because of the cross, now lives in glory.

Several writers and, in particular, St Teresa of Avila, associate humility with mental prayer: "The Lord gives us a humility quite different from our own [which] is nothing by comparison with this true and enlightened humility which he teaches us and which produces within us shame capable of totally overwhelming us. It is a very well known fact that, through the knowledge he gives us, God wishes us to understand that, naturally speaking, there is no good in us".

Pierre de Berulle (f 1629) concentrates especially on abnegation (of which humility is the deepest manifestation): "There are two essential foundation stones on which this abnegation is built. The first is a very low esteem for all things created and most of all for oneself. [...] The second is a very high esteem for God [...] because it is humility that gives a soul capacity for God, and the extent of this capacity and of the soul's disposition towards God depends on the extent of this humility".

The Jesuit Francois Guillore (+ 1684) destroys any remaining illusions about humility: "To abnegate yourself totally before God is good, providing you do so without secretly taking pleasure in it".

3. IN THE CATECHISMS AND "INSTRUCTIONS" OF DE LA SALLE

3.1. Humility is learnt as a part of personal development

There is little mention of humility in catechisms intended for beginners, but as the teaching becomes more advanced there is an increasing mention of it. The reason for this is probably because the catechism manual is limited in size, and because in later pages, subjects are treated which involve humility. It is as if education in humility goes hand in hand with the various stages of personal development.

3.2. In a sacramental context (GA)

Beginners learn in the *Large Summary* of the *Du-*

ties of a Christian towards God that "humility is a virtue" opposed to pride, through which "one comes to know and [...] and despise oneself (CL 23,385 = GA 0,20,5).

The model it proposes is "the great humility of Our Lord, of the Most Blessed Virgin and the saints". There is no mention of the Gospel teaching regarding this virtue, which should make us "willingly perform low and humiliating actions in front of others" (CL 23,380 = GA 0,49,2). It is with humility that we ask pardon for our sins and prepare ourselves to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist (CL 23,398 & 411 = GA 0,23,8 & 0,26,10).

3.3. Humility and prayer (DB)

The *Duties of a Christian* in the question-and-answer form (CL 21 = DB) takes up in full the teachings of GA on humility, but in addition insists on its place in prayer, because "prayer is a request that is made with humility and insistence" (248 = 4,1,12).

For our prayers to be "good and pleasing to God, useful to ourselves and our neighbour", we have to pray with humility and give external signs of it (255f = 4,3,11). The just do not always obtain what they ask because God "wishes to make them humbler and more abandoned to his holy will" (250 = 4,2,4).

This teaching on prayer assigns a place to humility on the basis of its definition of the word "prayer". It is a pity, however, that it limits itself to the prayer of petition. There is a more complete definition of prayer in DB, where we read that it is "the raising of our soul to God in order to pay him our respects and to ask him to respond to our needs" (244 = 4,1,2). Later we are given an abbreviated form in everyday language: "Prayer which one makes to God to ask him for some grace [...] is really what is called prayer" (248-4,1,12).

3.4. Biblical motivation (DA)

"Humility, which is opposed to pride, is the realisation of our misery and a willing submission to our neighbour" (CL 20,186 = DA 216,1,6). The Lasallian catechism in continuous prose (CL 20 = DA) mentions humility 46 times. Its use is limited to a number of very narrow contexts, such as dispositions for prayer (16 times) and the sacrament of penance (20 times). It adds nothing new to what we find in GA or DB on the humility of a penitent (276 = 306,0,4).

On the other hand, another page in this work (429f = 402,1,13-15) has a whole section on the prayer of the humble person and provides a series of motives all based on the Bible: Abraham's attitude (Gn 18,27), Judith's prayer (Jt 8,17 & 9,4) and that of the Publican (Mt 23,12) "granted immediately because of the humility of his prayer".

3.5. The humility of Jesus and the saints (DC)

The last volume of the *Duties* (CL 22 = DC) runs through the liturgical calendar, inviting the Christian to adore the humility of Jesus on Palm Sunday (161 = 42,7,7), to imitate his humility during his passion (169

= 42,8,14) and to thank him "for having died such a vile and humiliating death for our sins" (57 = 20,11,6).

After contemplating "the mystery of Our Lord", the Christian is invited to imitate him in his life and actions in the liturgical year. Ash Wednesday (53 = 20,9,7), Lent (85 - 30,6,3) and Eastertime (96 -30,8,9) are points in the temporal cycle which provide an incentive to be humble.

The feasts of the saints offer a great many models of this virtue. In the incarnation of the Son of God, Mary demonstrated "deep humility when, being chosen to be the mother of God, she said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'" (136 = 42,1,4). Her Birth (199 = 43,2,3), her Visitation (204 = 43,4,3) and her Assumption (210 = 43,5,6) are occasions characterised by humility.

De La Salle invites us to imitate the humility of St Joseph (275f = DC 44,18,5 & 10), of St Michael (221 = 44,3,3) and "the deep humility" of John the Baptist (229 = 44,5,11).

3.6. For those who live in the "world" (RB)

There is nothing really new in the *Instructions and Prayers*. However, the very personal outpourings of affection for Holy Mass, confession and communion give, perhaps, a more human face to Christian humility.

The *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness* invite the Christian to be proud of his baptism and of his belonging to the Church, rather than to be humble. All the same, the adjective "shameful" occurs 24 times to describe ways of behaving condemned by politeness, such as wiping the dish clean with bread (CL 19,99 = RB 204,4,263) or kicking people (CL 19,48 = RB 114,1,134).

All in all, in the works intended for Christians as a whole, and particularly for the pupils of the Christian Schools, De La Salle is very restrained in his references to humility. He recommends its practice mainly in contexts such as the prayer of petition, Lent, Holy Week, confession and communion.

According to the author of the *Duties of a Christian*, the first stage of humility is self-knowledge. The second, self-contempt, must go hand-in-hand with the first. While Blain speaks simply of "horror of oneself" (CL 8,408), De La Salle adds self-forgetfulness, as we will see in his writings for the Brothers.

4. IN DE LA SALLE'S WORKS WRITTEN FOR THE BROTHERS

4.1. One of the "principal virtues"

In the 1718 text of the *Common Rules*, the "exercises of humility" which are practised in the Institute seem to be limited to the "self-accusation" of one's faults to the Director (RC 5,7). Neither the "advertisement of defects" (RC 5,9), nor "giving an account of one's conduct" (RC 5,14) is defined as an act of humility.

The Brothers will show "very great moderation and humility" in all their external behaviour (RC 21,13). There is nothing comparable, however, with the degrees of humility mentioned in St Benedict's Rule.

The *Collection* deals specifically with humility as one of "the principal virtues that the Brothers must make sure they practise" (CL 15,154 = R 15). It follows monastic tradition when it says: "Consider this virtue as the foundation of all the other moral virtues, without which one cannot have any solid piety, since piety without humility is usually only pure hypocrisy or illusion" (CL 15,172 = R 15,8,1).

One should "make great efforts to know oneself and adopt "alow opinion" of oneself (CL 15,173 = R 15,8,2). We return here to the meaning found in GA and DB. If one is accused, one should not justify oneself (CL 15,174 = R 15,8,4), according to a note in DA (CL 20,186 = 216,1,6).

Humility is included also among the "twelve qualities of a good teacher" (CL 15,6 = R 5 & CL 24,228). It is worth pointing out this positive treatment of this virtue.

4.2. During the exercise of mental prayer (EM)

The *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* uses the term "humility" 136 times. The context is that of prayer, and we have read already that humility is necessary for both adoration and the prayer of petition. The first part of the Method of Mental Prayer includes "acts of humility, confusion and contrition", the second part, "acts of confusion and contrition".

Of particular interest is the model meditation in part two on the virtue of humility. It shows that this virtue is not included in this work for the sake of padding. Its main contribution regarding humility is the list it gives of biblical references to the prayer of the humble person:²

- Gn 18,27 : The intercession of Abraham.
- Ps 51 (50): Prayer of the contrite and humble heart.
- The psalms of the humble and poor of Yahweh.
- Lk 18,13f: Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.
- Jn 13,5f: Example of humility given by Jesus.
- Mt 11,29: Jesus gentle and humble of heart.
- Mt 23,12f: Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled.
- Lk 1,46f: The humility of Mary
- Ph 2,6f: The kenosis of the Son of God.

4.3. With the exaggerated terminology of the times

"Of ourselves, all that we can do is to offend God" we read in EM. Later, we find: "To say I am made of clay and ashes is to pay me excessive honour, for this clay and these ashes are the work of God" (CL 14,49 = EM5,152f).³

What we read here cannot be taken literally: it is simply the hyperbole typical of a particular literary style. This style is found frequently in 17th century French writings, in both poetry and texts striving for eloquence. All the same, none of this prevents De La Salle from professing an optimistic theological view when he writes: "The most excellent and the greatest creatures that God created are angels and men, and it is even for them that he made all things" (CL 20,19 = DA 103,0,3).

When we turn to the act of adoration we can speak of mystical humility: "I adore you, My Lord Jesus Christ, teaching the holy virtue of humility (prostrate at the feet of your Apostles in order to wash them so as to give me an example)" (CL 14,100 = EM 12,272,2). One feels here that mental prayer is not speculative thinking about a virtue, but contemplation of Jesus in his behaviour, his relationships and his actions (CL 50,477). Humility comes from imitating the person one loves. This probably explains the use of hyperbole we have pointed out. The language of love is not the rigorous language of theology.

4.4. Ascetical humility (MF)

Each of the meditations written by De La Salle is a self-contained literary unit. The importance given to this virtue or that, in this case, humility, differs greatly

from one case to another. The following examples may make this clearer.

The feast of the Circumcision shows us the sovereign Lawgiver submitting himself to a law made for sinners: "Let us admire this day the obedience and humility of our Saviour in this mystery. [...] From the example of Christ you should learn submission to those whom God has given you as Superiors; to humble yourself when occasion requires" (MF 93,1). This is ascetical humility involving the observance of a law, rather loosely based on the submission of Jesus (in human terms, it is the parents of Jesus who fulfil the Law).

St Thomas Aquinas also offers an example of ascetical humility: "Endeavour to emulate this saint's humility since you have nothing within you save what is low and debasing. And to acquire this virtue, cherish humiliations" (MF 108,3).

4.5. Apostolic humility (MF)

De La Salle sees an apostolic dimension in St Francis Xavier's humility: "God gives the grace of converting souls most abundantly to the humble. [...] Do you wish to convert and win over your disciples to God? [...] The more you practise self-abasement [...] the more easily you will touch the hearts of those you instruct" (MF 79,2).

The first point of the meditation for Christmas urges us to have a great love for poverty in union with Jesus who is born poor. The second point adds love of abasement: "In choosing our present state, we should have prepared ourselves for abasement, like the Son of God, when he became man" (MF 86,2). The third point insists on the importance of what we can call the **apostolic humility of conformity**: "Nothing so attracts souls to God as the poverty and humility of those who try to lead them to him. [...] Rest assured that as long as you have a sincere love for poverty and for all that is humiliating, you will produce fruit in souls [...] for you can attract them to God only insofar as you resemble Jesus at his birth" (MF 86,3).

These are the two dimensions, interior and exterior, of the poverty-humility of the apostle, the source of his apostolic success. Elsewhere, De La Salle links humility with the Beatitude of the meek who will possess the land (MD 65,2; CL 20,190 = DA 216,2,7).

4.6. "Self-contempt" (MD)

The *Meditations for Sundays* regularly associate humility with obedience (MD 7,1; 12,2; 21,2), openness of conscience (MD 19,2f; 52,3), and prayer (MD 38,3; 63,2). As a typical example we can use the meditation on the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (MD 63), entitled "On self-contempt".

In the first point we read: "For what esteem does he deserve whose very being does not belong to him, but to God who gave it to him, and who can withdraw it or dissolve it whenever it pleases him?" From what is said here one could think that God was a capricious potentate, an absolute monarch, a ruler inspired by a philosophy preaching that man is despicable — man who was created in the image of God, as De La Salle writes elsewhere (CL 21,21 = DA 103,0,9). Was such a declaration necessary to justify the ascetical statement with which the first point begins: "Self-contempt is one of the most powerful means of acquiring virtue"? Perhaps the quotation from Holy Scripture is preferable: "Of all sin pride is the root" (MD 63,1 quoting Si 10,13).

The second point proposes the prayer of the Publican as a model who "considered himself merely as a great sinner, and humbly petitioned for mercy". For this reason, "because of his humility and simplicity, he went away justified" (MD 63,2).

The third point is more demanding: "Self-contempt can hardly be pushed too far". This is said, however, in the context of mystical conformity to Jesus crucified in a spirit of reparation: "You who have crucified the Son of God a second time by your sins [...] should endeavour to conform to the example of Our Lord by sentiments of humility, and looking upon yourself with the eyes of faith, consider only what is capable of inspiring you with a low idea of yourself before God and men. Since, then, God thwarts the proud and keeps his grace for the humble, you ought, both exteriorly and interiorly, to practise self-abasement and take pleasure therein. You have numerous occasions of doing so in your state and employment" (MD 63,3).

This demanding doctrine is applied to the context of everyday life, but it refers first of all to the union Jesus wishes to have with us through his redeeming incarnation.

We are given an example of humility in Mary when she recognised the action of God within her and "abased herself interiorly before him, acknowledging that she owed everything to him", and saying within herself what she later expressed in the *Magnificat*: "He who is mighty, he whose name is holy has wrought for me his wonders" (MD 163,3).

4.7. Humility and "love of prayer"

The meditation for Rogation Tuesday, entitled "On the love of prayer", is similar to MD 63, but its tone is

quite different. We read: "The second reason why God grants everything to those who pray is because of the humility with which they ask for what they need. As the Wise Man says: 'He laughs at the mocker, grants his favours to the humble'" (MD 38,3).

God is pictured here as "one who has a greater wish to bestow his favours upon you than you have to receive them" (MD 38,1). The prayer of the Publican is quoted again and the following conclusion drawn: "When you pray, therefore, let it be with so much humility that God will not be able to refuse anything you ask" (MD 38,3).

5. IN THE LETTERS OF "THE HUMBLE PRIEST" (CL 8,241)

Only one handwritten letter of the Founder speaks of humility. In it he exhorts Brother Denis to accept the humiliations that come to him during the course of the day and not try to avoid them (LA 12,18; cf. LC 69,3).

In general, the Founder's letters offering guidance to his Brothers are direct and serene in tone. This tone, no doubt, helped them to become more self-aware, the first step towards humility.

In the extracts from letters published by Blain advice regarding humility is abundant. For example, in a letter to a Brother who finds it difficult to accept being reprimanded for his defects, De La Salle writes: "I see now, my very dear Brother, what you want. You are quite willing to declare that you have a great love for humility, that you hold it in high esteem, while at the same time avoiding humiliations as much as you can. What good will it do you to love the virtue while refusing to practise it?" (LI 83,4).

After noting De La Salle's words of counsel to "a fervent woman religious", Blain concludes: "The humble priest, wishing to train this religious in the interior life, gave a description of his own. It is clear that this letter gives us a true picture of his own humility and of the low sentiments regarding himself and his neighbour with which it inspired him" (CL 8,241).

Here are some extracts from this letter: "You must be convinced that your vocation demands of you quite a different degree of humility and quite a different renunciation of the world and its spirit,

and even of yourself, so that what would be tolerated in another person should not seem tolerable in you at all. [...] Ask Our Lord to engrave this humility deep in your heart. [...] If, my dear Sister, you can engrave these sentiments on your heart and live by them, loving abjection, contempt and the rebuffs of others, seeking them and embracing them as being what you deserve, I think that you will have found an efficacious means, perhaps the only means, of drawing down God's mercy on yourself (LI 123).

This rather uncompromising language was used by numerous spiritual directors of the 17th century, and they were understood. Elsewhere, the same biographer shows De La Salle having to moderate the spirit of penance and the desire for humiliation of certain of his first Brothers, who were only too ready to follow him along this path (CL 8,248f).

For elite souls, spiritual combat is a battle where no quarter is given, between the spirit of the world and the love of God. It is a tragic battle, for who can say for sure that he is saved? However, it is also an optimistic battle, because it is also Christ's battle, and he tells us: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (MD 1,2; MF 105,3; CL 15,99 - R 12,15).

While not softening the demanding advice in the letter we have quoted, the motives given in meditations 38 and 86 serve as a complement, and give us a glimpse of the Founder's burning love as it traces out a true way of perfection.

Commenting on De La Salle's meditation on humility in EM, Brothers Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage have the following to say: "We would misrepresent the Lasallian message on this subject, it seems to us, if humility were reduced to an individual virtue and, a fortiori, if it were understood in a restrictive and negative sense, as an attitude of fear of responsibilities, of self-distrust paralyzing commitment. In reality, the key to a right understanding of the Lasallian insistence on humility appears to us to be given by the Meditation on Christmas. [...] The community of Brothers was founded in response to the distressful situation of abandoned youth. To reach these young people in order to announce to them the salvation of God, the Brothers become part of the process of the Incarnation of the Son of God. They put aside their own interests, renounce the pursuit of riches and power, so as to draw as close as possible to the humble condition of these forsaken children. Like the children, they live in poverty and obscurity. It is by becoming part of this situation, which associates them with the mystery of God become human, that they fulfil the conditions necessary to make their ministry bear fruit. The meditation for the feast of St Francis Xavier expresses this idea well: 'The more you practise self-abasement, the more you will touch the hearts of those whom you instruct' " (CAMPOS & SAUVAGE, *Encountering God...*, 309f= CL 50,475, quoting MF 79,2).

¹ Quotations taken from the article on Humility in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (See bibliography).

² De La Salle does not enlarge on the connection between piety and humility in R, but in MF 161,3 he says: "Your Institute may be very useful to the Church, but rest assured that it will be so only insofar as it is built on these two foundations, namely, piety and humility. These will render it unshakable". MR 203,1 shows the zeal of Jesus in his treatment of the Pharisees: "Because he could not tolerate their hypocrisy, false religion, nor the pride which led them to think highly of their own actions and praise themselves, while belittling and blaming the behaviour of others". No doubt, because piety, which puts us into a cor-

rect relationship with God, presupposes in doing so that we know and esteem ourselves only in accordance with God's views.

³ The end of this act of humility encompasses the wider vision of biblical thinking. "He is able to situate humility as a fundamentally joyful attitude of the person with whom this so great God forms an alliance to the point of being entirely in him. [...] The act of humility, far from turning us back on ourselves, turns us towards God with enthusiasm, as an offering: 'You wish me to be entirely yours'. One could even recite the words of consecration thinking of the formula of vows: 'I consecrate myself entirely to you' " (CAMPOS & SAUVAGE, 188f = CL 50,354).

Complementary themes

Conversion
Gentleness
Inspirations
Joy

Mortification
Penitent
Poor
Renunciation-Detachment

Sacraments
Salvation
Silence
Spirit of Christianity
World

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80. IMITATION OF CHRIST

80.A. THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

Summary

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1. DEFINITION OF SOME TERMS

1.1. The word "imitation" in the language of the time

We can begin with an example that seems representative. It is taken from P. Richelet's *Nouveau Dictionnaire François* (Amsterdam, 1709), which defines *imitation* as follows: "It is the effort a person makes to try to walk in the footsteps of someone who has done something worthy to serve as a model".

While some of the words used in the definition have the same meaning as they do in De La Salle's writ-

ings, others are used differently by him, a procedure not uncommon among authors.

- "It is an effort": It involves exercise, which can be painful. It is not simply a matter of admiration.

- "to try": Effort comes from an act of will, a personal decision. For De La Salle, however, imitation in the context of the imitation of Christ does not depend solely on effort: it is a gratuitous grace from God. And yet, at the same time, a person is not dispensed

from making an effort of the will and asking for this grace in prayer.

- "Walk in the footsteps of someone": What is involved here is not a single action, but a process, a lifetime of following the path marked out for us by the Other. This image goes beyond that of physical imitation: it suggests we move forward as we follow. It is more dynamic and implies a relationship: we follow a person and not an idea.

- "Model": This is the term we use to describe a person or a thing we try to reproduce or assimilate by observing, but which nevertheless remains outside of ourselves. Here too, De La Salle does not accept the definition given, namely, that what is imitated remains outside, does not become part of our being. He insists that the imitation of Christ, far from limiting itself to the reproduction of external characteristics, much reach the point when it takes on the spirit of Jesus Christ, so that this spirit can act in us in a wholly interior way.

1.2. The imitation of Jesus Christ in the writings of De La Salle

We cannot limit our analysis to the actual use of the word "imitation" in De La Salle's writings, even if it is associated with Christ: we need to consider the idea itself from a much broader perspective. In doing so, we will discover that, when this word is used, it behaves like the horizon: when you try to get close to it, all you see is a vista that seems to go on forever.

We could look at this question from the point of view of profundity, moving from "imitation" to "following" and then to "conformity" and "union". Among other things, we would notice, as we moved from one level down to another, that the word "imitation" becomes more frequent in De La Salle's writings. This shift in meaning is not always clear-cut: what we observe is rather continuity, or even better still, a sort of superimposition. What is clear, however, is that with

all these different levels and shades of meaning, De La Salle is describing a process in which the imitation of Christ is the threshold that has to be crossed in order to enter into the mystery of Christ and finally achieve identification with him.

It is a process of interiorisation by which De La Salle leads us from the external to the interior, from acts to attitudes, from "doing like" to "feeling like", from external conformity to a conformity of sentiments and intentions, from imitating him to living his mystery, from following him to allowing oneself to be used by his Spirit.

In order to understand this process as De La Salle saw it, it is useful to compare the use made of images or titles referring to Jesus. In the whole of De La Salle's works, the more static and passive word "model" is used only a dozen times with reference to Jesus Christ. "Master", on the other hand, with its more dynamic and personalising meaning and its stress on the fundamental role of Christ, is used four times more frequently. Used even more frequently is "Saviour", which at the same time expresses the initiative of Christ and refers to his redeeming incarnation, in which we are called to participate.

If we consider the classic distinction made in the imitation and following of Christ between the ascetic and the mystical, we find a dynamic balance in De La Salle's writings between the two poles represented by man's efforts and his openness to grace. While each seems to require the other, it is clear that De La Salle is strongly attracted by the idea of **God's initiative**. That is why De La Salle, while retaining the bipolarity mentioned above, maintains that imitation of Christ can take place only within a mystical process, in which the Spirit of Jesus reveals himself as its prime mover. Far from being a human achievement, the imitation of Christ consists in being open to the movement of the Spirit who can accomplish in us and through us the mystery of salvation.

2. CHRISTOCENTRICITY IN THE FRENCH SCHOOL OF SPIRITUALITY

It would be difficult to describe here the extent to which De La Salle's thinking on this topic was influenced by the various contemporary and earlier thinkers who are said to belong to the 17th century French

school of spirituality. Since christology is an essential element of Christian spirituality, it is not surprising that the Founder of the Christian Schools treated it at length in his writings. With his usual eclecticism,¹

he included in these not only his own personal experience, but also the contributions of a number of authors to whom he had access.

There is no doubt, however, that his principal source of inspiration is to be found in the Gospels and in the letters of St Paul. This is clearly borne out by the profusion of New Testament quotations which characterise his writings.

And then, as a man of his times, De La Salle shared in the christocentricity of the French school of spirituality. The words of St Paul quoted so often by Pierre de Berulle: "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ" (Ga 20,2), are very much present also in De La Salle's writings, either as a quotation or as an allusion.

De La Salle came into contact with this rich source of christology when he spent 18 months at the seminary founded by Jean Jacques Olier at St Sulpice in Paris. While he was there, he was able to read and meditate on the following text among others, in the spiritual directory of the seminary:

"The first and last aim of this Institute should be to live totally for God in Jesus Christ Our Lord, in such a way that the inner being of his Son may enter the very depth of our heart, and that each one may say what St Paul said so confidently about himself: 'I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ'. For all of us here, this should be the only expectation and the only thought. All activity should be directed towards living interiorly the life of Christ and manifesting it by the actions of our mortal bodies".²

There are other areas also in which De La Salle's writings reflect the thinking of the French school:

- Doing everything in union with Jesus: "We should never act except in union with him, and under his direction and inspiration" (P. de Berulle).³

- Conforming oneself to Christ, reproducing his virtues, especially his "crucifying" virtues: "We are obliged to become conformable to Jesus Christ, as St Paul teaches us. [...] In order to know with certainty if you love him, examine yourself to see if you have a firm desire to conform yourself to Jesus Christ, if you want to reproduce his virtues in yourself, especially his crucifying virtues, such as his poverty, his humility, his mortification and his patience; and if you really wish to have all his dispositions" (J.J. Olier).⁴

- It is the Holy Spirit who makes us like Jesus Christ: "To be a true Christian, we need to have in us the Holy Spirit who can make us live interiorly and externally like Jesus Christ" (J.J. Olier).⁵

We find frequent references to these ideas in De La Salle's writings. However, this agreement on basic ideas does not lead to mimicry on his part. His own charism inspires him to stress what he feels is appropriate. For example, we see that he does not stress a recurring theme in Berullian christology: "Jesus Christ as the worshipper *par excellence* of the Father". Instead, he concentrates on Jesus Christ as God incarnate and on his redemptive mission. The reason for this difference in emphasis probably stems from De La Salle's wish to highlight the role of the ministerial role of the Christian educator as "co-redeemer".

3. THE IMITATION AND FOLLOWING OF CHRIST IN THE LIFE OF DE LA SALLE

Before looking more closely at De La Salle's teachings regarding the imitation and following of Christ, we need to examine De La Salle's own life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We can find in his life certain indications which will help us to understand his writings better.*⁶

3.1. A process of incarnation

From the moment De La Salle became involved with the work of the schools, his life became a process of "kenosis", of leaving one world behind to join

another, of renunciation of security and privilege, of detachment from material and cultural goods. He had to be born again among people he had formerly considered inferior to his valet (CL 7,169), and become as if one of them. He opened his heart to their needs and accepted to serve them. This was the origin of the "Christian Schools". Despite the obvious similarity between De La Salle's steps and those of Jesus, one can hardly call it mimicry: there is no desire to repeat gestures, nor to resemble the prophet from Nazareth externally, nor to copy his most heroic attitudes.⁷

If there is a resemblance, it is because De La Salle sees every event and every human relationship as a "kairos" — a manifestation of God. His awareness of participating in the work of God leads him to accept his own life history as salvation history. It is there that identification with Christ takes place, the Christ of the mystery of the incarnation and salvation. We will understand the various steps of this process of identification with Christ better if we analyse the event with which it culminated: the renunciation of his family wealth and his canonry.⁸

Towards the middle of 1682, De La Salle took a decisive step regarding his commitment to gratuitous schools for the poor: he left his own house and went to live with the teachers. It was a time when they were being assailed by one of their worst temptations: anxiety about their lack of future security. De La Salle invited them to abandon themselves into the hands of Providence. Only in this way would they be able to strengthen their stability and at the same time ensure the continued existence of the schools. The biographers, especially Blain, put a long speech on the lips of the Founder,⁹ to which the teachers replied by accusing De La Salle of being comfortably off thanks to his inherited wealth and canonry. With such security he was hardly in a position to invite them to trust in Providence. In the face of this challenge, De La Salle began a period of discernment which he ended by going to consult Fr Barre. His reply was a commentary on a Gospel text:

"The foxes have holes and the birds of the sky have their nests and a place to shelter, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

"The foxes", he said, "are the children of this world who are attached to the goods of this earth. The birds of the sky are religious who have a cell in which to shelter. But those who, like you, devote themselves to teaching the poor, must not have any other wealth on this earth besides that of the Son of Man.

"And so, you must not only dispose of all your wealth, but also give up your canonry and live in the total absence of anything that could distract you from procuring God's glory".¹⁰

All three biographers report this event and realise that what is at stake is much more than giving up wealth and a canonry: it is a vocation, it is De La Salle's unconditional response to God's call to him to accomplish his work. The outcome of this critical situ-

ation was De La Salle's decision to dispose of his wealth and canonry in order to devote himself definitively to the schools, with Providence as his only support.

3.2. With clear consequences

If we base ourselves on the form of Barre's advice, and on the words attributed by Blain to De La Salle when he gives his reasons for making his final choice, we can draw five conclusions:

1. The choice De La Salle made was in the context of following Christ. He does not try to put into practice a passage from the Gospel, or imitate the poverty and detachment of Christ while he was on earth. The a priori approach which starts with the written Word of God and tries to apply it to everyday life; which reduces the Gospel to a collection of examples to be followed; or which uses the historical Jesus as a model to be copied as faithfully as possible, all this is totally alien to De La Salle's thinking. His motive was not even to give the teachers an example of abandonment to God's Providence. This may have been a consequence of what he did, but it was not the aim he had in view.
2. De La Salle's decision was one more element in the development of his vocation. This process was both a "memory" and a "plan" for the future. The memory included all the commitments he had undertaken under God's guidance and which had pointed him in a particular direction. Continuing along the path would lead to the accomplishment of God's plan. He wondered whether to continue in the direction indicated, and found the answer, not by reading unrelated scriptural passages, but in the challenge of living persons, the teachers.
3. On finding the correct answer would depend the successful accomplishment of the plan which is none other than the "work of God", not visualised in abstract terms, but already existing in the two or three schools he had taken charge of. As he had observed, it was there that God's work of salvation was accomplished. It was by contributing to God's work that he shared in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and accomplished his work. It was of this that Fr Barré reminded De La Salle when he spoke of the vocation and mission of the teachers.
4. The question De La Salle had to answer was: How to bring God's salvation to those God had entrusted

to him? In the process of discernment that would follow, he would, of course, obtain enlightenment from Holy Scripture, but not read in solitude, but in dialogue with those who accompanied him on his journey in life. He tries to respond to God's call in the situation in which he received it.

5. Finally, he believed that the accomplishment of God's work required him to live with the teachers in community and to set aside anything that would hinder this. The bond linking him to them required him to share their insecurity, instead of trying to remedy it by purely human means, by using his wealth to help the work of the schools. And so, he and the teachers placed their trust in the Providence of the God who had called them to undertake his work.

This moment of crisis in the life of De La Salle reveals one of the key elements of life in the footsteps of Christ: fidelity, not to the letter, but to the spirit of the Gospel; not to a past history of salvation that ought to be repeated, but to the history of salvation taking place today in the concrete circumstances of life and situations in which God places us. The imitation of Christ does not consist in copying slavishly a model, but in becoming part of the process of incarnation begun by him and continued today in every believer. This process leads to God because it accomplishes the work of God, the mission received by Christ from his Father, and in which our vocation calls us to participate.

During this period of discernment which led De La Salle to become totally detached, we can see the experimental basis of what he will express in theological terms in his *Meditations*: the real moving force behind the process of following and identifying oneself with Christ is not the initiative of the individual person, but the Spirit. Through his own experience of total abandonment to the Spirit of Christ, De La Salle came to the conclusion that he was accomplishing not his own work, but that of God, and that he had to allow him to lay the foundation.

3.3. In search of communion and service

In the second place, De La Salle's participation in the Mystery of Christ is characterised by the search for communion and service in order to build up the newly born community.

The search for communion will lead him to build a community inspired by love, by fraternal relations

and the spirit of the Beatitudes. This communion has to be built up from within. Let us return to the event in De La Salle's life we have just referred to. In the coming together of the various life journeys involved — De La Salle's, the teachers' and Barre's — the Word of God took on power and reality. The Word of God ceases to be speculative and comes to life in this mutual challenge and, by bringing into existence communion among the persons involved, creates the community.

The parallels established by Barre are both strange and enlightening. With the three terms he takes from the Gospel — the foxes, the birds of the sky and the Son of Man — he links three others: the children of this world, religious and teachers who devote themselves to the instruction of the poor. The first two serve to highlight the third. And so, Nicolas Barre says the following to the canon from Rheims:

1. That the mystery of salvation incarnated in the Son of Man is already being fulfilled in the lives of these teachers who help poor children.

2. That this mystery, the same in Christ as in the teachers, implies total dependence on Divine Providence, because it is God's work, and he gives it a foundation.

3. That he himself, who is already participating in the saving mystery of Christ because he is in communion with these teachers, must extend his participation to the very end, strengthening this communion and adopting the insecure situation of the teachers. This is the issue at stake behind the call he hears to accept his vocation.

In their commentaries, the biographers try to give a hagiographical sense to Barré's thinking. They make the call to his vocation consist in an invitation to imitate certain aspects of the life of Christ, to become more perfect, to offer a personal example to the teachers. Barré, on the contrary, inverts the perspective: the centre of gravity is not to be found in De La Salle, in his concern for personal virtue or the imitation of Christ, but in the teachers, that is, in the mission they accomplish and in which the Mystery of Christ is fulfilled.

It is in total communion with the teachers and their mission that the process of incarnation that De La Salle has begun will mature, and that the vocation to which God calls him will gradually take form, as he himself pointed out in his *Memoir on the Beginnings* (CL 10,105f).

This kind of "inversion" in the following of Christ which takes place once a mission is shared, appears frequently in De La Salle's writings for the Brothers, as a reflection of his own personal experience. Within this communion, De La Salle insists that his position as Founder and Superior of the community includes the essential dimension of service.

In this instance also, the biographers mislead us, considering that the attitude of De La Salle was intended to serve as an example. But De La Salle's approach to the building up of the Brothers' community was not based on furnishing an example, by centring everything on himself, but on the exercise of a ministry, centring everything on the mission accomplished by the Brothers. That is to say, he helps the Brothers to understand the mission they are fulfilling — a **mission of salvation**, representing Christ and how on this mission their community and their personal salvation are founded. He helps them also to seek perfection, not for its own sake, but because it is needed for the accomplishment of their saving mission, and so that the Mystery of Christ can be clearly seen through them.

We find here another example of "off-centring inversion", which occurs frequently in De La Salle's writings: he assumes authority as Superior of the community to exercise a role of leadership for the spiritual benefit of his Brothers. As we see in *The Rules I have imposed upon myself*, De La Salle exercised authority as "taking the place of Our Lord" (CL 10,115 = EP 3,0,7). Basically this is a representation of the fatherhood of God who has entrusted him with the accompaniment of his Brothers. As a father, he hopes that the fraternal communion that has begun will reach its full maturity.¹¹ This explains his obsession with divesting himself of his authority. Here, too, the biographers stress the humility of De La Salle, but once again they miss the point: it is the community that is central here. De La Salle wants to see his community take its destiny into its own hands and take responsibility for its mission. Deep down, there is his humility, of course, but it is not a reason. It is rather a point of view which enables him to see that the place in which the mission, the "work of God", is successfully carried out is the community. This explains his attitude which is similar to that of John the Baptist: he wishes the mission to grow while he himself diminishes.

3.4. Participation in the saving mission

The third permanent component we see in De La Salle's life is his participation in Christ's saving mission among the poor. Initially rather gradually, but later more radically, De La Salle involves himself with the work of the schools, which he sees as a liberating structure for the children of the artisans and the poor. He did not arrive at this commitment as the result of theoretical consideration, nor because he wished to apply the teachings of the Gospel. His reasons — although certainly rooted in his sensitivity to the Gospels and his docility to the Spirit — are based rather on his contact with the needs of the schoolmasters of Rheims and, through them, with the abandoned state of the children of the artisans and the poor, who touched his heart and moved him to respond creatively. He felt that God loved them through him and wished to save them, having himself "enlightened the heart of those he had chosen" to be his ministers (MR 193,1).

From that point onwards, there began the search for and the establishment of the structures necessary for this liberation: gratuitous teaching, daily regulations, training of teachers, development of "ministerial" attitudes, consecration by vows, the lay character of the Institute, etc. And so there matured an awareness of ministry which led the teachers to adopt a lifestyle, whose evangelical character and, in particular, its poverty, enabled the Brothers to be seen as visible signs of Jesus Christ and to be recognised as "saviours" of the poor. These are the terms used by De La Salle in his meditation for Christmas Day in which, exceptionally, he uses "we" when referring to the process of incarnation which has led him and the Brothers to resemble Jesus Christ, not as a result of *a priori* imitation, but because of their ministry: "In choosing our present state, we should have prepared ourselves for abasement, like the Son of God when he became man, for lowliness is the characteristic of our profession and our employment. We are poor Brothers. [...] Only the poor come to us" (MF 86,2).

Having drawn close to them, De La Salle recognises "Jesus Christ under the poor rags of the children" (MF 96,3). He concentrates all his efforts on making them discover their dignity as sons of God to the point of becoming totally free, so that he can finally see them being brought up "in the Christian spirit" (MR 207,3). During the course of this process, which he interprets with the eyes of faith, De La Salle becomes convinced — and he passes on this conviction —

tion to his Brothers — that the work of the schools which God has entrusted to them (cf. MR 207,3) is an integral part of Christ's redemptive work (cf. MR 195,1), and makes them ministers of God, "dispensers of his mysteries" (MR 205,1) and "ambassadors of Jesus Christ" (MR 201,2).

This new insight gained from De La Salle's life invites us to see the act of becoming sharers in Jesus' saving mission and mystery, not as an act of will or an intellectual decision, but as the consequence of human experience: it is the result of a life open to the inspirations of the Spirit which, from one commitment to another has become by the Father's will part of the redeeming work of Christ (cf. MR 195,1).

3.5. The following of Christ, a dimension of the Brother's life

In a document handed down to us by Blain under the title: *The Rules I have imposed upon myself* (CL 10,114f = EP 3,0,1f), and which resembles our modern "personal programme", we see how De La Salle understands the following of Christ.¹²

Rule 5 reads as follows: "I will unite my actions to those of Our Lord at least twenty times a day and try to have views and intentions conformable to his". If we look beyond the form taken by this rule (e. g. 20 times), we see that, in speaking of his wish to be united with Christ, De La Salle stresses, not external imitation, but conformity with the views and intentions of Christ. It is these views and intentions which constitute for De La Salle the "here and now". In De La Salle's life, the point of reference is the very centre of salvation history, which is not some past event, but the work of God accomplished in Christ in the here and now. His concern to be faithful to the present

moment is reflected in various "rules" (10, 13, 14, 15, 18). which express his awareness of being an instrument of Christ's saving mystery through the mission that has been entrusted to him. In the same way, when De La Salle proposes to do penance for the faults his Brothers declare to him, considering himself guilty of them (rule 7), he is above all expressing his identification with Christ, who "without having sinned, became sin for us" (Rm 8,3). His intention is not primarily to imitate the penance of Christ, but if he takes on the attitude of a penitent which, according to his biographers, was remarkable, it is as a result of his religious experience, his identification with the redeeming Christ.

When De La Salle tells his Brothers to consider their work as a ministry, he is basing himself on his own interior experience: he considers himself to be taking the place of Our Lord for his Brothers. From the point of view of reconciliation in Christ, he has to assume responsibility for their salvation, he has to bear their sins. He takes the place of Christ as his "representative", as his "co-worker in the salvation of souls" (MR 196,2). His task is not "to act as if he were Christ", but rather to act with the awareness that through him Christ accomplishes his mystery of reconciliation. Christ acts in him. And so he says in Rule 6: "When my Brothers come to me for advice, I will ask Our Lord to give it to them". The same idea is reflected in MR 195: after reminding the Brothers that in their ministry to children, they "enlighten them in the person of Jesus Christ", he adds: "In order to acquit yourself of this duty with as much perfection and exactitude as God requires of you, give yourself often to the Spirit of Our Lord, so as to act only through him and for no personal considerations" (MR 195,2).

4. THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST IN THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

Although references to this process can be found throughout his works, it cannot be said that De La Salle wrote a treatise on the process of identification with Christ. What we have, however, makes it easy to understand the process of interiorisation which De La Salle considered to be an essential characteristic of the following of Christ and the participation in his mystery. We shall now examine what De La Salle understood by christocentricity.¹³

4.1. "Disciple and imitator of Jesus Christ"

4.1.1. CONVERSION A CONDITION

"We call Christians all those who belong to that religion. This name comes from Christ, and it signifies disciple and imitator of Jesus Christ" (CL 20, Preface = DA 0,0,5). The first step towards identification with Christ is to become his disciple, and by implication, his imitator. De La Salle, however, prefers to be

more explicit: he uses both terms to define a Christian. A disciple is recognised by the very fact of imitating Christ, because, if we consider him our Master, "we must try to conform our life to his and to what he has taught us in his Holy Gospel" (CL 22,191 = DC 42,13,11). It is not surprising, therefore, that De La Salle insists so much on the need to imitate Christ, considering it as a constant activity in the life of a Christian. He offers various motives for this. Jesus Christ wished to be our model: "If Jesus Christ has performed these divine mysteries" it was "not only to redeem us, but also to instruct us and to lead us by his example to the practice of the most solid and sanctifying virtues" (CL 14,60 = EM 8,180).

As disciples, we must try to resemble him. De La Salle expresses this in the form of a prayer: "Lord, make me live in such a way that there is some resemblance between my life and yours by imitating your holy virtues" CL 14,66 = EM 8,193,8). This is an indispensable condition for sharing the glory that is Jesus Christ's and which he has promised us: "I am convinced of this truth, that if I wish to share in your glory in heaven, I have to make myself conformable to you on earth" (CL 14,81 = EM 9,225,4).

But the Christian educator, the Brother, has also another motive: he is the representative of Christ for his disciples: "And since you are taking his place, consider yourself obliged to do the same thing" (MR 196,1). There are a number of consequences that flow from this absolute necessity to imitate Jesus Christ and to learn from him. One of them, since we cannot imitate someone we do not know, is that we have to have recourse to the principal source of this knowledge, the *New Testament*. The Founder insists on the regular reading of especially the Gospels (cf. MR 196; MF 190,1).

4.1.2. A RADICAL CHOICE

What De La Salle is actually proposing, although in different terms, by his repeated invitation to read the Gospels in order to know Christ and imitate him, is to enter into a process of "evangelical radically" or, in other words, to undertake a tireless search for the roots of Christian life, or make conversion to Christ a dimension of one's life. And this applies to everyone, whether he is a consecrated person, such as the Brother, or an ordinary Christian, such as his disciples, since all are Christians. De La Salle speaks often

of this desire for radicality and of not being satisfied with the level one has reached: "Attach yourself to what is of faith [in mental prayer] and leads [...] to the imitation of Jesus Christ and to the exercise of the virtues he practised, trying to imitate him as perfectly as possible" (CL 15,129 = R 14,3,3). "Have you renounced all things from the bottom of your heart?" (MF 167,1). He says the same regarding the pupils: "You must encourage them, as Jesus Christ teaches, not to be satisfied with doing good actions" MR 202,2). "That in all things they grow in Jesus Christ" (MR 205,3).

4.1.3. A CRUCIFYING CHOICE

The imitation of Jesus Christ is a human activity that is eminently ascetic : it calls for will power and constant effort: "I am resolved to follow you, O my loving Saviour, whatever it may cost me" (CL 14,64 = EM 8,192,5). Far from hiding the element of mortification involved in the following of Christ, he stresses its necessity, but this has nothing to do with the desire for perfection: it is a consequence of following Christ.

- Seeking God's glory: "Being prepared [...] to sacrifice all honour, health and life for the glory and interests of God, imitating Jesus Christ, who said: 'Whoever wishes to follow me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me' " (CL 15,155 = R 15,1,2 quoting Mt 16,24).
- For love of him: "Suffer all trials of mind and body for the love of God and to imitate Jesus Christ" (CL 15,180 = R 15,11,1).
- Because "devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ [consists in] imitating the virtues which he practised" (CL 22,188 = DC 42,13,4).
- So that we can enjoy his glory: "Imitate the crucified life of Our Lord Jesus Christ so that our body and our soul can enjoy the glory prepared for them in heaven" (CL 22,176 = DC 42,10,6).

4.1.4. A PERSONALISING CHOICE

De La Salle does not consider the imitation of Christ as an end in itself, nor as something mechanical or an exercise in willpower directed at a model who remains outside of ourselves. On the contrary, he insists on its personalising character and that we are following someone and not something. This is so much so that we can rely on the model to help us to imitate him. This help is interior, in the form of grace, since it is the model himself who inspires and helps us to imitate him.

We have already seen that De La Salle is reluctant to use the term "model" in reference to Christ, because perhaps he wishes to avoid the passive connotation of the word. He prefers to speak of the "example" of Christ, stressing in this way the positive character of the invitation of the "Master" and "Saviour" who goes before us so that we can follow him: "Jesus Christ has taught us the practice of the virtues by his example and by his words as things necessary for salvation. That is why he says he is the Way" (CL 14,94 = EM 11,249).

Aware of the dependence we have on the Master, De La Salle invites us to ask for the grace of imitation so that we can follow Christ better; "Give me the grace that you have earned for me [...] to imitate you [...] the grace to follow you and walk in your footsteps" (CL 14,64 = EM 8,192,7).

4.1.5. FOR APOSTOLIC MOTIVES

Where imitation can be seen most clearly as a manifestation of the following of Jesus Christ is in the context of its primary purpose, the mission. We are called to imitate Christ in order to participate in the mission entrusted to him by his Father. It should be noted that De La Salle does not attribute this purpose only to the Brothers, but to all Christians, saying in his catechism that among "the virtues that we must particularly imitate in Jesus Christ" there is "the zeal that he always showed for the salvation of souls" (CL 22,192 = DC 42,13,12).

We must accomplish the saving mission in which we are participating in the same way as Jesus Christ, that is, by being faithful to the will of the Father. For this purpose, we must renounce our own will "because Jesus Christ renounced his own will at the moment of his conception, even though it was very holy and incapable of disorder. For this reason he said: 'I have not come to do my will'" (CL 15,114 = R 13,13,1 quoting Hb 10,7).

The invitation to follow Christ is even more pressing in the case of the Brother-teachers: "Attach yourself to Jesus Christ alone; occupy yourself with his doctrine and with the holy truths he has taught us, since he has chosen you in preference to many others to announce these truths to your pupils, who are his beloved ones" (MF 167,2).

Imitation motivated by the ministry applies to all aspects of the mission, and that is why the Brothers

Christian educators — must, like the Apostles "model their conduct in everything on Jesus Christ and be with him at all the conversions he brought about. [...] This is also what you must do, since Jesus Christ has chosen you among so many others to be his cooperators in the salvation of souls. You must study in the Gospel how Jesus led his disciples to practise the truths of the Gospel" (MR 196,2).

The text we have quoted, and the whole of MF 196, helps us to further our understanding of the imitation of Jesus Christ in the context of following and identifying with Christ: we imitate the person who chose us and made us his cooperators. By imitating him we do not simply evoke a memory: we continue his action, we bring him into the present where he continues to save people, so much so that he "wants your disciples to look upon you as they look upon him" (MR 195,2). He alone can give life to what we do: "All your care for the children entrusted to you would be useless if Jesus Christ himself did not give the power, the quality and the energy that is needed to render your care useful" (MR 195,3).

The imitation of Christ ensures that prayer is authentic and, at the same time, is a fruit of that prayer. This is yet another point De La Salle insists on: he wants there to be a clear link between prayer and life, between prayer and the ministry of the Brother. It is significant that he says: "Do not look for feelings in prayer", but value whatever leads to the "imitation of Christ and the exercise of the virtues he practised" (CL 15,129 = R 14,3,3). And when we are praying about a particular mystery — in mental prayer — and have assimilated fully its spirit, "it is necessary to join to this reverence for the mystery the interior desire to benefit from it and to receive the spirit, the grace and the fruit that Our Lord wants us to derive from it" (CL 14,60 = EM 7,179).

4.2. In conformity with his views and motives

4.2.1. INSPIRATION WHICH MOTIVATES

In the introduction to the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness*, De La Salle speaks of the need for the motivation of all human conduct, including social courtesy, to be inspired by Jesus Christ. He bases himself on the words of St Paul: "Never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus" (CL 19,11 = RB 0,0,3 quoting Col 3,17).

De La Salle adds that it is for this reason that, when

parents educate their children, they should give them motives such as "the glory of God and salvation", "through respect for the presence of God" or because their neighbours are "living members of Jesus Christ and living temples animated by the Holy Spirit". These "views" and "motives", in addition to "sanctifying all their actions", enable them to distinguish correctly between "Christian politeness and affability and what is worldly and almost pagan". Inspired by Christian sentiments "they will be able to live as true Christians, their external behaviour conformable to that of Jesus Christ and to that of their profession" (CL 19,III f = RB 0,0,5f).

He says the same to the teachers: "In carrying out your service to children, you will not fulfil your ministry adequately if you conform only to the external actions of Jesus Christ. [...] You must also adopt his views and motives as your own" (MR 196,3).

This desire to become truly interior and to conform to the views of Jesus Christ is expressed even more strongly in EM, where it is sought as a grace from God. Many of the "acts" of the *Method* express this desire. The act of union with Our Lord (meditating on the virtue of humility) reads as follows: "May the unction of your holy grace teach me to be humble of heart and to practise humility, not only exteriorly, as do people of the world out of shrewdness, but with a view of faith, in union with your Spirit, in conformity with your dispositions, and in imitation of you" (CL 14,105 = EM 14,285,2).

4.2.2. IMITATING CHRIST IN HIS VIRTUES

There is an even deeper level than interior conformity to Jesus Christ shown by external conduct: participation "in the spirit of the mysteries" (CL 14,59f = EM 7,178f). The following of Christ can be seen as a constant movement from the spirit of the mysteries to attitudes which result from it, to external acts, and back to the spirit that should inspire them (cf. RB, introduction).

In the *Duties of a Christian*, the consideration of the various mysteries of Jesus Christ leads to the imitation of the virtues exemplified in them. And so, "to honour the mystery of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ", we must "imitate the humility, obedience, patience, charity and gentleness that Our Lord revealed during his passion" (CL 22,169 = DC 42,8,14). In EM, mental prayer on a virtue of Jesus Christ makes

us enter into the spirit that inspired him and unites us to him. This spirit puts us in contact with the unique mystery of salvation which Jesus Christ accomplishes throughout history.¹⁴ Once we have assimilated the spirit of the mystery, the normal development of our mental prayer should lead us to choose a practical application.

4.2.3. EVEN IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

In De La Salle's writings, interior conformity with Christ always leads to the paschal mystery. In this phase of interior conformity, De La Salle lays special stress on Christ suffering on the cross, and it is clear that it is in this that we can be most like him: "We are Christian only insofar as we resemble our divine Saviour, and it is the love of suffering and mortification that renders us like him" (MF 176,3).

Moreover, according to the meditation for the Transfiguration, conformity to the suffering Christ is necessary if the Father is to recognise us as having entered into the mystery of Jesus, his "well-beloved Son" (Mt 17,5). When a soul "is thus transfigured with Jesus it must take pleasure in speaking of his passion and cross. In this way, it will show that its whole desire is to conform with him in his state of suffering, for the Eternal Father will recognise it as his well-beloved only insofar as it has a love of suffering" (MF 152,3).

The attitudes or "virtues" which are most difficult from a human point of view reveal their true meaning when considered in the light of the spirit of the mystery of the cross revealed in Jesus. This is the case of obedience to which De La Salle devotes considerable space. For him, to obey means to conform ourselves to Jesus Christ, and to make part of ourselves the love Christ had for his Father, the same love which made him sacrifice himself to make up for our sins (cf. CL 15,169 = R 15,6,3).

In De La Salle's writings, there are abundant references to mortification, penance and participation in the sufferings of Christ. His point of view, which appears pessimistic, becomes understandable when seen in the light of the process of which it is part, namely, the transformation of the "old man" into the "new man". It is a process of purification, of death in order to have new life. This is not masochism, but the search for the new life offered by the Risen Christ, the same Christ who died on the cross.

It is a process which encourages the renunciation of sin in order "to live for holiness" (MD 28,2). The motive is Jesus Christ, and not our own sanctification. "We who have been born in sin and have lived in a sinful state, should conform ourselves to Jesus Christ in this life and suffer with him if we wish to have him as our Head and to be his members. We should also destroy sin in ourselves" (MF 125,1).

In this process, suffering is positive in character; it is a condition of life, a means of uniting ourselves with the redeeming mystery of Christ. "All that remains now, as St Paul says, is 'to complete what is lacking in the Passion of Christ, that is, the application that must be made of his merits to ourselves through our participation in his sufferings" (MD 25,3 quoting Col 1,24).

The stress in this process is not so much on the personal desire for advancement, however essential, but on the contemplation of Jesus in his state of humiliation (cf. MF 112,2), the grace that he has earned for us. In the meditation for Holy Saturday, "On the Five Wounds of Jesus Christ", De La Salle invites us to "place your hand [...] in the wound of the side [...] to penetrate, if possible, right to the heart of Jesus, in order to draw from it into yours, sentiments of Christian patience, entire resignation and perfect conformity to the will of God" (MD 28,3).

We can say that the process leads us to conformity with the Saviour. The most representative image of the Saviour in all Christian spirituality is that of the crucified Christ. In order that God can send us as saviours, in order that the poor can recognise us as such (cf. MF 86,3), we must become conformable to the crucified Christ: "We should make our whole glory consist in bearing the scars of the Lord Jesus printed on our body. [...] We shall never better appear his servants, friends and imitators, than by imprinting his holy cross on ourselves, and by suffering like him" (MF 165,3).

The background to this whole process, and not just its final phase, is illuminated by the resurrection of Christ which, as De La Salle says, "is both glorious for him and advantageous for the faithful [...] because it is an assurance that we too shall rise again [...] because by his resurrection he conquered death" (MD 29,1). If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, it was "that we too might live".

However, what is required of us now is painful: "Crucify this body with all its passions and its im-

pulses on the cross of Jesus Christ". This pain is alleviated by Christ's promise to make us like himself in his resurrection. He can make our bodies participate even now "in the incorruptibility of Jesus Christ by being preserved from sin" (MD 29,2).

And so, in De La Salle's eyes, this process of "kenosis" in order to conform to Christ is a process of resurrection, full of hope and joy: "The resurrection of Christ should procure you also the advantage of rising from the dead spiritually, by making you live [...] an entirely new life. [...] Mortify your earthly bodies [...] and divest yourself of the old man and put on the new" (MD 29,3).

4.2.4. IN EVERYDAY LIFE, A MINISTRY WHICH INVOLVES DYING TO SELF

The process of conforming ourselves to Christ, which we have just considered, runs the risk of being seen in terms of an abstract understanding of the Gospel, a sort of anachronistic transposition of the passion of Christ, if we separate it from the context in which De La Salle placed it, namely, the ministry of the Brother. It is in his ministry and by it that the Brother achieves interior conformity with Christ. The difficulties he experiences in his ministry help him "to die to himself" (MF 145,3), and thanks to the example and love of Christ he will overcome them: "Yet in all this we are conquerors, through him who has granted us his love, and who delivered himself up for our sake" (MF 152,1).

4.3. Living the mystery of Christ

4.3.1. A SPIRITUAL REALITY

In De La Salle's spiritual teaching, the imitation of Christ and identification with him lead us to a new aspect of following Christ: the living experience of the mystery of Christ. We can see here an echo of the words of St Paul, which were so dear to the French school of spirituality: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Ga 2,20). According to De La Salle, these words sum up perfectly the ideal which ought to guide our Christian life and our educational ministry.

When we first begin to follow Christ, and seem to be fully involved in the ascetic process of conversion, union with Christ is presented as an ideal for all Christians and not only for religious. In a book written for the pupils, his *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass*,

Confession and Communion, St John Baptist de La Salle has the following to say: "Change, then, Divine Jesus, this natural life of mine which seeks only its own comfort [...] so that living only with the life you have given me, I can truly say that I no longer live my own life, but that you live in me" (CL 17,272 = 16,24,2).

In EM, De La Salle puts this union with Christ on a much higher level and, following Jn 17, compares it to the union of Christ with his Father: "You were in your Father and your Father was in you. [...] Make me dwell in you and may you dwell in me" (CL 14,56 = EM 6,169,a & f).

4.3.2. IN THE MINISTRY

When this mystical experience of Christian life is applied to the educational ministry of children there is no qualitative shift. When De La Salle uses terms such as "ministers of Jesus Christ" or "ambassadors and representatives of Jesus Christ" and applies them to the Brothers and, by extension, to Christian educators, he is speaking of the same reality which enables him to see the Brothers as "sacraments" for poor and abandoned children, who will be loved, served, taught and saved by Christ in the person of the Brother: "He wants your disciples to see him in you" (MR 195,2).

4.3.3. IN PRAYER

However, this "sacramentality" of the Brother is not automatic. On the one hand, it depends on the interior union the Brother has with Christ and which he can acquire through mental prayer: "You must, therefore, apply yourself assiduously to prayer in order to succeed in your ministry. [...] Jesus Christ, seeing that you regard him in your employment as the one who can do everything and yourself as an instrument that ought to be moved only by him, will not fail to grant you what you ask of him" (MR 196,1).

On the other hand, this sacramentality requires the Brother to identify himself with the purpose Christ has given his mission, and to have in his work "intentions as pure as those of Jesus Christ" (MR 196,3). Drawing a clear parallel between the Brothers and Christ, De La Salle tells them that, as ministers of Jesus Christ, their sole aim must be "the love and the glory of God" and "to procure the salvation of souls" (MR 201,2). Like the Son of God who came into this world, the Brother's aim must be to "destroy sin" (MR 202,1) and to communicate life to his pupils, so that he can say "what Jesus Christ said about the sheep

whose shepherd he is: [...] 'I have come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly'" (MR 201,3 quoting Jn 10,10).

4.3.4. AS PART OF THE CHURCH

The mystery of Christ is also the mystery of the Church, his Mystical Body. Sharing in the mystery of Christ leads invariably to sharing in the mystery of the Church. The ministry of the Brother comes simultaneously from "Jesus Christ and his Church" (MR 201,2). This is yet another motive "to have much zeal in your vocation". "You must also show the Church what love you have for her and give her proof of your zeal, since it is for the Church, the body of Christ, that you work" (MR 201,2).

In the spiritual teachings of De La Salle, the following of Christ has a strong ecclesial character which is reflected in the Brother's ministry. The Brother, as a sacrament of Christ in the Church, should act in such a way that his zeal gives "tangible proof that [he] loves those whom God has entrusted to him, just as Jesus Christ has loved his Church" (MR 201,2).

Sharing the zeal of the Church "for the sanctification of her children", the Brother helps "them to become truly part of the structure of this building" which is the Church (MR 201,2), "to build up with them the body of Jesus Christ and to make them holy and perfect" (MR 198,3).

De La Salle attaches great importance to this ecclesial dimension of the Brother's ministry, because, as he says, the Brother will have to render an account of his actions "as minister of God and dispenser of his mysteries for children [...] before the tribunal of Christ" at the Last Judgment (MR 205,1). De La Salle affirms the Brother's responsibility to build up the Church: "When Jesus Christ made you responsible for the instruction of children and their formation in piety, he entrusted you with the task of building up his body which is the Church, and as far as possible, of making her holy and purifying her by the word of life" (MR 205,3). The motive put forward by De La Salle reflects the identification of the mystery of Christ with that of the Church: "This is why he wants you to give him a faithful account when he calls for it, for he has this responsibility very much at heart, having loved his Church so much that he gave himself up for it" (MR 205,3). Finally he applies the mystery to the children from a christological and an ecclesiological point

of view. It is the responsibility of the Brother to introduce the children to this mystery. This is, in fact, the purpose of Christian initiation: "Jesus Christ desires also that you accomplish your task of making them holy so well that they reach the age of the perfect man and the fulness of Christ [...] and grow to the full maturity of Christ, who is their head, and through whom the whole body of the Church holds its structure and its union, so that they may be always so united with it and in it that [...] they will share in the promises of God in Jesus Christ" (MR 205,3).

St John's image of the vine and branches is used by De La Salle to express our union with Christ. We should note the ecclesial context in which he uses this Gospel allegory in EM. De La Salle comments on the "second manner of placing ourselves in the holy presence of God in the place where we are by considering Our Lord present in the midst of those who are gathered together in his name" (CL 14,9 = EM 2,24). In this community context, he refers to the fruit that this way of being present can produce, and he stresses the mystical power of prayer in life: "a continuous movement of our actions to Christ and of Christ's to us".¹³ "That all of our actions may be related to Jesus Christ and tend towards him as to their centre and draw all of their power from him, as the branches of the vine draw their sap from the vine" (CL 14,10f = EM 2,31f). Staying with the image of the vine, the second fruit introduces us into the mystery of communion between Jesus Christ and ourselves, the source of any fruit we produce: "Jesus Christ does everything in us because he lives in us and we live in him, and that has the result, he says, that we bear fruit in plenty" (CL 14,11 = EM 2,35).

In MR, De La Salle applies explicitly to the ministry of the Brother what was implicit in EM: the effectiveness of his work with children will depend on "the virtue, the power and the efficacy" that Jesus Christ gives him, since "all your care for the children entrusted to you will be true and effective to the extent that Jesus Christ blesses it and you remain united with him, like the branch of the vine" (MR 195,3).

4.3.5. A SACRIFICIAL PROCESS

Participation in the mystery of Christ reaches its highest point when we unite ourselves to his consecration to his Father. Following a tendency of the French school of spirituality, itself based on St Paul's letters, De La Salle returns often to the sacrificial as-

pect of Christ's redemption and the effect it should have on our lives. Basing himself on two scriptural texts (Ph 2,5f & Hb 9,15), De La Salle outlines the different phases of the sacrifice of Christ "who humiliated himself, taking the form of a servant, submitting himself to his creatures and being obedient to them until death on the cross; and who offering himself as a victim without stain, was exalted in glory" and has become "the mediator of the New Testament".¹⁶ We should note the positive character of the descending-ascending movement.

De La Salle indicates what response this requires from Christians and from the Brothers, because of their ministry. The basic disposition they should have can be found in the Eucharist: "Enter into the spirit of the sacrifice in which [Jesus] always lived, in which he died, and in which he wishes to remain till the end of time" (CL 22,192 = DC 42,13,13). He invites them to unite themselves with Christ in the Mass: "If Jesus Christ gives his divine life for us, we cannot do less than offer him our earthly and creaturely lives. This is the sacrifice we must offer if we wish to participate in that of Jesus Christ" (CL 15,220 = R 16,8,3). After the consecration, he suggests we intensify our efforts to be united to Christ and his dispositions as "the victim of adoration of his father, and as his mediator and reconciler with men" (CL 15,140 = R 14,6,8).

4.3.6. CONCLUSIONS

De La Salle asks the Brothers how their conduct reflects these dispositions in everyday life: "You offered yourself to God when you left the world. Can it be said you kept nothing back? [...] You ought not to rest content with having once given yourself to God. You should renew this donation every day and consecrate all your actions to God by doing them all for his sake" (MF 104,2).

In the meditation for the Vigil of the Ascension, De La Salle, basing himself on Jn 17, compares Christ's consecration to the Father with that of the Brother: Jesus consecrates himself for his disciples so that they can be sanctified in truth and can "contribute to the sanctification of others. It is for this reason he offers himself to his Father, and wishes to sacrifice himself by his death on the cross". In the same way, the Brother must sacrifice himself for his pupils: "Since you are expected to bring about the sanctification of your pupils, you ought yourself to possess holiness to an uncommon degree" (MD 39,2).

The union of our actions with those of Christ is what makes them holy and agreeable to God since they are thus included in the offering Christ made of himself to his Father. It is a gift and at the same time a requirement for everybody. De La Salle reminds the Brothers of this regarding their work with children: "Since you are obliged to help your disciples to save themselves, you must lead them to unite all their actions to those of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Their actions are made holy by his merits and consecration, becoming through him pleasing to God and a means of their salvation" (MR 195,1).

Christ's offering of himself to the Father leads to the sacrifice of his own life. The Brother, as a "sacrament" of Christ in his ministry, must be aware of the consequences of his own consecration: "It must have been the ardent zeal you had to save the souls of those you had to instruct that led you to sacrifice yourself and spend your whole life giving them a Christian education and procuring for them a life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next" (MR 201,3).

And so, like the shepherd willing to give his life for his sheep, the Brother achieves union with Christ by exercising his ministry with one last disposition: by "acting with love, with a true and sincere zeal, accepting with much patience the difficulties [he] has to suffer, willing to be dishonoured by men and mistreated even to give [his] life for Jesus in the fulfilment of [his] ministry" (MR 201,1; Cf. MR 198,2; MF 135,2; 137,3).

4.4. Identification with Christ in the Spirit

The further we enter into the mystery of Christ, the stronger the interior force that draws us towards union with Christ. De La Salle draws our attention to this force which is none other than the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ His role in the following of Christ is so important, that De La Salle makes its successful outcome dependent on him, both for the Brothers and their pupils. However, the exercise of this power is restricted by our human freedom, our own desire to be converted to Christ and our openness to the Spirit's action.

De La Salle has much to say about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Brother's ministry and in Christian life in general. We shall restrict our own commentary, however, to the topic which concerns us specifically, and concentrate on aspects related to the process of identification with Christ.

4.4.1. THE SPIRIT, A GRATUITOUS GIFT

Whoever sets off to follow in the footsteps of Christ receives the Spirit of Jesus as a gift. The longer he pursues this process, the greater this gift becomes. When De La Salle speaks of the Holy Spirit as a gift of the Father given by the Son to the Church, he reflects the Christian tradition at its most pure (Jn 14,16; 20,22). De La Salle assures those who have left all to follow Christ that they will receive a hundred fold through the gift of the Spirit: "It is impossible to conceive how much Jesus loves those who have left all for his sake, and how he showers graces upon them both for themselves and for others. As their heart is empty of the things of this world, God fills it with his Holy Spirit" (MF 167,2).

By his constant reference to the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of spiritual life, De La Salle affirms the absolute primacy of God's initiative in the generation of the New Man. De La Salle often expresses this profound conviction, based on his personal experience, in the form of a prayer which he invites the Brothers to use: "Often repeat with the Church these holy words: 'Send your Holy Spirit to give us a new life, and you will renew the face of the earth'" (MD 42,3).

The gift of the Spirit is the first consequence of the presence of Jesus Christ in the midst of the Brothers: "He is in the midst of them in order to give them his Holy Spirit and to direct them by him in all of their actions and in all of their conduct" (CL 14,9= EM 2,26). This gift is also closely linked with the Eucharist and is its most immediate effect: "It is in order to give them his Spirit that he gives them his body in this most august sacrament" (MD 26,1). De La Salle returns to this topic in all the meditations for the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi: "Thus when we receive the body of Christ, we participate in Our Saviour's life [...] if we preserve the Spirit of Christ, which is what he leaves in us" (MD 48,3).

4.4.2. FUNDAMENTAL ROLE OF THE PRESENT IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

The history of salvation, which is centred on the events of the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, is continued and made present by the action of the Holy Spirit. In the EM, De La Salle mentions frequently the need to enter into "the spirit of the mysteries" of Jesus Christ. What this expression means is that the saving grace attached to the historical actions of Jesus

transcends those actions and reaches our lives today. Presiding over this process there is the divine Spirit who alone is capable of making us conform interiorly with the attitudes of Jesus, and of making his saving action present in us. Sometimes, De La Salle makes a clearer reference to the Holy Spirit, as when he says: "It is therefore most appropriate for us to unite ourselves with Jesus' birth, to come into contact with his Spirit and share in it: which gives us access to the Father as adopted children in his only Son" (CL 14,84 = EM 10,231 quoting Ga 4,5-6).

The intervention of the Spirit in our history makes life "according to Christ" possible, and this life is none other than the life of the Spirit. In his writings, at times, De La Salle moves from one aspect of this same reality to the other, to show that they are identical and to stress that the Spirit now has the leading role in the process of identification with Christ. For example in EM, basing himself on Ga 2,20, he moves from the life of Christ to the life of the Spirit: "Come, therefore, Holy Spirit, take possession of my heart, and animate all my actions to such an extent that it may be said that you produce them more than I. [...] Happy those who live and act only by the Spirit of God. It is of them we may say that they no longer live, but that it is Jesus Christ, or rather the Holy spirit, who lives in them" (CL 14,18f = EM 2,62).

In MD 48, the movement is in the opposite direction : this time the emphasis is on the presence of Jesus Christ in our soul through the action of the Spirit: "Do you allow him full liberty to communicate his Holy Spirit to your soul? Is he so alive in you that you are able to say that it is no longer you who live, but that it is Christ that lives in you?" (MD 48,1 quoting Ga 2,20).

4.4.3. EFFORT AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE SPIRIT

De La Salle is surprisingly successful in maintaining a balance between the role of human liberty and that of divine initiative in the process of the following of Christ. We know that De La Salle strongly encouraged ascetic effort, self-control and the desire of conversion, but at the same time, and even more strongly, if possible, he stressed the importance of being open to the action of God and to the acceptance of the gift of the Spirit, who is the moving force behind our journey to God and especially our apostolic activity. He is careful to avoid both voluntarism and quietism.

The meditation for Pentecost Tuesday shows these two opposite poles quite clearly. First, there is the call to make an effort of the will: "It is impossible to preserve the life of grace unless we mortify the inclinations of our corrupt nature: this is what St Paul calls the flesh. Hence, the greater resistance you offer the more you will be strengthened in the life of grace. This is the only way in which you may belong entirely to Jesus Christ" (MD 45,2).

However, despite this being "the only way", there is no doubt as to whose initiative it really is, and who the moving force is: "You must act [in your state] through grace and show that you are moved by the impulse of the Spirit of God. This is the mark, according to St Paul, that you are in the grace of God. As he says, if you live by the Spirit, act also by the Spirit" (MD 45,3 quoting Gal 5,25).

Elsewhere, the relationship between the two poles is expressed by the opposition of life and death: "It is this Holy Spirit who animates our actions, and who is in them a spirit of life and who acts in such a way that they are not dead actions in us" (CL 14,11 = EM 2,36).

However, even given this balance, human nature is very fragile, and De La Salle does not hesitate to insist on the absolute priority of the divine initiative. In a prayer before communion written for use by the pupils, he prays to Christ to give him his supreme gift to animate all his actions: "Come and take possession of my heart again and leave your Holy Spirit there as a token of your love, so that he can regulate all its movements, moderate all my passions, and leave in me only an inclination to do good" (CL 17,259 = I 6,13,2).

Our identification with Christ is accomplished "by the movement of the Spirit" (MD 3,2). This is equally true in the case of the pupils who also have to achieve identification with Christ, a process which depends on the efficacy of our ministry. Only the movement of the Spirit, if we have accepted him as a gift, will enable us to represent Jesus Christ. He alone will produce the required fruits in the pupils: "Frequently give yourself to the Spirit of Our Lord, to act only under his influence and not through any self-seeking. This Holy Spirit, then, will fill your students with himself, and they will be able to possess fully the Christian spirit" (MR 195,2).

By a process of cause and effect, De La Salle makes the success of the ministry to the pupils depend on the

action of the Spirit in the person of the minister, whose words become then "spirit and life for them [...] because they will be produced by the Spirit of God living" in you. In this way, there will be communicated to them "the spirit of Christianity [...]" which is the Spirit of Jesus Christ himself (MR 196,3).

It is not only the sacramentality of the minister which counts in this transmission of the Spirit. The sacramentality of the poor person is also a channel for the action of the Spirit: "Like St Francis, look upon

them as the image of Jesus Christ, and as being the best disposed to receive his Spirit abundantly". From this "ministerial situation", De La Salle draws a conclusion regarding the identification of the Brother with Christ: "In this way, the more you cherish them, the more you will belong to Jesus Christ" (MF 173,1). It can be seen, therefore, that the apostolic ministry is the place, par excellence, where identification with Christ takes place, under the action of the Spirit, both for the teacher and for the pupil.

¹ See the probable names of these writers in GALLEGRO, *Vida...*, vol. 2, p. 14f.

² Quoted by DEVILLE, *L'École française...*, p. 103.

³ *Idem*, p. 34.

⁴ *Pensées choisies*, quoted by CLÉMENT MARCEL, *Par le mouvement...*, p. 45-46.

⁵ *Catéchisme chrétien*, quoted *idem*, p. 169.

⁶ With a few changes, we use the outline suggested by CAMPOS, CL 45,336-340.

⁷ M. Campos warns against the reductionistic interpretation by the early biographers of De La Salle's evangelical life. Taking Blain as an example (and through him, Bernard and Maillefer), he shows how the Gospel, and therefore also the following of Christ, is reduced to "a summary of virtues, truths of faith, and conduct which govern the life of a Christian. [...] Secondly, he reduces the life of his hero to the heroic imitation of Gospel norms and practices" (CL 45,351; cf. 345f).

⁸ CL45,143f.

⁹ CL 7,187; CL 6,54, § 28; CL 6,55, § 41-42.

¹⁰ CL 6,56, § 29; CL 6,57, § 43.

¹¹ Cf. CL 45, 339.

¹² For a more complete treatment of the *Rules I have imposed upon myself*, cf. CL 45,250-272.

¹³ We follow closely the study by SAUVAGE & CAMPOS in AEP, p. 189-217.

¹⁴ Cf. CAMPOS & SAUVAGE, *Encountering God*. p. 418.

¹⁵ See the commentary in *id.* p. 51-57.

¹⁶ MF 93,2. Cf. CAMPOS & SAUVAGE, *id.* p. 414-416.

¹⁷ It is often difficult to grasp what De La Salle meant exactly by such expressions as "spirit of Jesus Christ", "spirit of Christianity", "spirit of faith", "spirit of God" and "Holy Spirit". We invite the reader to consult a study by L. VARELA in *Biblia y Espiritualidad*, p. 182-190. Also recommended is the article by the same author on "Spirit of Christianity", in *Lasallian Themes 1*.

As far as we are concerned, and to avoid confusion in the use of these expressions, we shall restrict ourselves to a number of texts in which one can presume that the references are to the Holy Spirit, the divine person, or in which one can identify him as the one infuses us with the life of Christ. Cf. CAMPOS & SAUVAGE, *Encountering God*. p. 46-54 & 416-418; MAYMI, *Vida de fe*, p. 82-89.

80. IMITATION OF CHRIST

80.B. A CONTINUAL INVERSION OF PERSPECTIVE IN FOLLOWING CHRIST

Summary

1. An original thought

1.1 .Cultural influences 1,2.De La Salle's personal spiritual journey 1.3.His charism 1,4.His central idea: the ministerial function of the educator of youth in the Church.

2. Becoming a disciple: a continual inversion of perspective

2.1.Our need for conversion 2.2.From personal effort to Christ's action in us 2.3.From concern because of our sins to the contemplation of Christ our Saviour 2.4.From penance in order to become perfect to union with the suffering Christ 2.5.Renouncing the world in order to give oneself to Christ 2.6.Not my will, but the Father's 2.7.From the condition of a disciple of Jesus Christ to that of Apostle 2.8.From following Christ and, "as an extra", exercising the ministry, to following Christ by exercising the ministry 2.9.From being a sign of Christ for the poor to looking upon the poor as signs of Christ for oneself 2.10.From belonging to Christ to serve the poor to serving the poor in order to identify oneself with Christ 2.11.From living the mystery of Christ to allowing Christ to manifest himself through us by the action of the Spirit.

3. "Being a Christian" and "being a minister of Jesus Christ" as one and the same process

3.1 .Each one according to the gifts he has received 3.2.The motivation of the minister of Jesus Christ 3.3.The Christian educator: a unified life.

1. AN ORIGINAL THOUGHT

De La Salle's teaching regarding the following of Christ does not differ from what has always been traditionally taught in the Church. For example, the four different levels in the process of identification with Christ (cf. 80.A.4) can be found in the writings of many Christian spiritual writers. It could hardly really be otherwise, and the fact that they are so clearly exemplified in De La Salle is a guarantee that the path

to Christ he proposes to us is a sure one. However, the method of following Christ proposed to us by De La Salle does have its own well-defined individuality, with characteristics that are significant without being exclusive.

This individuality, with the three characteristics given below, is expressed above all by its central idea.

1.1. Cultural influences

The cultural influence that marked De La Salle was not only that of the 17th century French school of spirituality: there were many other cultural influences, which provided him with the language to express his thoughts to us. It is this language which, for better or for worse, constitutes our first contact with him. His writings contain also a great wealth of biblical and patristic texts on which his culture was solidly founded. We find in them also various philosophical, anthropological and theological concepts which have been discarded as obsolete or have been relativised, or which no longer fit in with modern thinking. We have to recognise that culture, even theological culture, evolves, becomes enriched, and adapts to the new needs of mankind.

1.2. De La Salle's personal spiritual journey

We have already spoken of this when considering the following of Christ. The details of his life make his writings come alive, but in general, his reticence to speak about himself or his experiences makes it difficult to discover them.

1.3. His charism

The gift of the Spirit, the special charism which De La Salle received for the good of the Church, enabled him to discover new aspects of the mystery of

Christ, and to emphasise certain facets which others might not notice.

1.4. His central idea: the ministerial function of the educator of youth in the Church

There is a danger of the second and third elements we have mentioned becoming obscured and undervalued because of the first. It is, therefore, essential that we appreciate them at their true value, because they reveal to us a concrete way of following Christ in the Church. This is our heritage as Brothers and one which we share with other Christian members of the Lasallian Family.

The central idea on which these three elements confer a degree of individuality is the ministry of the Christian educator, considered from the point of view of the minister, and as it affects his pupils.

The mutual interaction of the elements we have mentioned gives rise to certain factors which we were able to identify when we described the process of following Christ, and which we would like to consider now in greater detail. These factors, hidden most often by their cultural form, provide us with a real challenge: they remind us that there is no neutral or standard way of following Christ, but that we have to do so through our own lives, using the gifts God has given us, and according to the ministry we exercise in the Church.

2. BECOMING A DISCIPLE: A CONTINUAL INVERSION OF PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Our need for conversion

Conversion, that is, the transformation of a person, the changing of his values and attitudes, his continual renewal inspired by the radicality of the Gospel, is inseparable from the following of Christ, for what is involved here is nothing less than the transformation of the "old man" into the "new man" created in the image of God.

There is always the danger, however, of reducing this process to the initial step, a sort of "gesture" of conversion, which excuses us from continuing along this road. De La Salle, aware of our natural tendency to stagnate, challenges us constantly to change our excessively human outlook and, making us dissatis-

fied with the level we have reached, urges us at the same time to take the next step.

This is very well illustrated by the challenge he addresses to the Brothers in the meditation for the feast of St Matthew, using as his point of departure the Apostle's reaction: "He rose up and followed him" (Mt 9,9). "Have you imitated the promptitude of St Matthew, who followed the divine invitation at the first word, without thinking of his affairs, and without asking time to consider the matter? How often has Our Lord called you and how often, like St Augustine, have you answered: 'Tomorrow, tomorrow I shall be converted'? Do you not still say it every day? Have you really left all from your innermost heart?" (MF 167,1).

The following of Christ easily turns into self-deception when our everyday life is not centred on Christ, but on ourselves; when the values of the world take priority over those of the Gospel; when we seek our own will and our own glory instead of the will and glory of God. De La Salle often uses this confrontation of attitudes to make us put aside self-deception and make specific choices about our lives. Through a series of confrontations, a Christocentric process is set in motion, which brings with it, on the one hand, a liberating departure from our own egoism in order to undertake God's work; and on the other, the guarantee of our incarnation among young people, especially the poor, in whom this christocentricity becomes history and reality.

Let us try to identify some of the main inversions of perspective which lead to conversion to the Lasallian way of following Christ.

2.2. From personal effort to Christ's action in us

Far from being the result of human effort, the process of identification with Christ is the result of Christ's action within us. Our effort is indispensable, but it is Christ who gives it efficacy and value. This conviction is reflected in the following prayer: "Do in me what you wish me to do" (CL 14,56 = EM 6,169,2). It is Christ's merits, because of our union with him, which make our actions, even the holiest ones, pleasing to God (cf. CL 17,7 = I 1,2,6).

This shifting balance between our efforts and Christ's action is often vigorously referred to in De La Salle's writings. It is interesting to compare, for example, meditations 85, 22 and 45, in that order. The context of the first, for the vigil of Christmas, is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who "has been knocking at the door of your heart and has been waiting to enter, and you have not wished to receive him. And why, if not because he comes to you poor, like a slave, a man of sorrows" (MF 85,1). The second, for Palm Sunday, has for theme the glorification of Jesus Christ, who has come "to establish his reign in souls" and asks us "to receive him fully by abandoning ourselves entirely to his direction" (MD 22,1 & 2). The third, for Pentecost Tuesday, speaks of the Holy Spirit who continues the action of Christ in us: "For when he [the Holy Spirit] comes into a soul it is for the purpose of giving it the life of grace, or of making it act through grace [...] grace which has been given you

and which Christ acquired with such pain" and which "the Holy Spirit with such goodness has communicated to you" (MD 45,1).

These three meditations highlight also the part played by human freedom in this balance: "If you would profit by the coming of Christ into your heart, you must make him master of your heart" (MF 85,2). "You must pay him the tribute of your actions [...] allowing him to reign over all your interior movements" (MD 22,1 & 2). "You have become free with the freedom of the children of God. [...] You must show that you are moved by the impulse of the Spirit of God" (MD 45,1 & 3).

The military connotations of some of De La Salle's language (normally borrowed from St Paul) underscore the dramatic character of the balance between our efforts and the action of Christ: "You must fight under his standard the enemies of your salvation. [...] He must be able to raise up an army composed of the virtues which should adorn your soul. [...] You must likewise combat valiantly [...] using the weapons he places in your hands" (MD 22,2). "The flesh with its desires fights against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. [...] If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh (that is, by the Spirit of God who dwells in you), you will live" (MD 45,2).

The final outcome of this shifting balance is union with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit as the only acting agent in our life: "That is the reason why the Son of God came down on earth, and that is why he wishes to come into our heart, in order to make us sharers in his nature" (MF 85,3). "So that you can truly say: 'It is Christ that lives in me' " (MD 22,2). "This is the only way in which you may belong entirely to Jesus Christ" (MD 45,2).

2.3. From concern because of our sins to the contemplation of Christ Saviour

The shift from the first position to the second can be seen clearly in the EM. The series of acts that De La Salle suggests to beginners prevents too much concentration on oneself, and leads quite naturally to the mystery of Christ: Even in "the three acts which refer to ourselves", whose language is permeated with pessimism and contempt for human nature, our attention is directed towards our Saviour, his love, his merits, his example, and the forgiveness he offers.

We see this same shift in the *Meditations*. In spite of the apparent insistence on our sins, this often serves simply as a springboard to make us draw close to Christ, trusting firmly in his love: "We who have been born in sin and have lived in a sinful state, should conform ourselves to Jesus Christ [...] neither affliction, nor distress nor hunger [...] should be able to separate us from the love of Jesus Christ, [...] who loved us so much as to deliver himself up to death for love of us" (MF 152,1 quoting Ep 5,2).

2.4. From penance in order to become perfect to union with the suffering Christ

De La Salle's insistence on mortification, the refusal of comfort and the refusal to satisfy the senses, clearly reflects (in the way it was formulated) certain anthropological and theological positions which have now been abandoned. He does not propose this as a means to acquire the greatest possible perfection, but rather to make up in our own bodies "what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (Col 1,24). What is lacking in each one of us is "the acceptance of his will, the union of our sufferings with those of Jesus Christ, as members of his body, suffering with him and for him" (MR 195,1). Behind this language, however, which may sound outmoded to modern ears, we should realise that the "avidity" for mortification which we find in De La Salle's writings, was common, not only to the classical ascetics, but also to the great mystics such as St Teresa, St John of the Cross, St Francis of Assisi. It was for them a way of dying, not through a love of death, but in order to enter into Life, the life that Christ earned for us by his death. Our mortification becomes a testimony of Christ living in us: "Try [...] to let no day pass without mortifying yourself in some way [...] through a motive of religion and to give witness to the one you profess" (MF 176,3).

According to De La Salle, then, penance is not self-centred but Christ-centred. He does away with the classical distinction between the ascetic and the mystical: through the action of the Spirit, they become part of the same dynamic process that plunges us into the mystery of Christ: "I renounce, therefore, my spirit, in order to surrender and abandon myself completely to the guidance of your Spirit and of yourself, so that, acting only in you and for you, the penance I shall do may become yours, and that it may be you who perform it in me" (CL 17,216 = I 3,38,2).

2.5. Renouncing the world in order to give oneself to Christ

The world whose values are opposed to those of the Kingdom, the world which hates Christ and his followers (Jn 15,18), the world which rejects the word of Christ and those who preach it (Jn 17,14f) is another source of tension for the follower of Christ. This world, to all appearances, we have left; but the world we find most difficult to leave is within ourselves, the world which manifests itself in our nature and in our inclinations which run more or less counter to the Gospel. De La Salle often returns to this fact and insists on renunciation as a condition of conformity to Christ: "You who have left the world to follow Christ in a life of retreat, should make it your chief concern to give yourself entirely to him" (MD 59,1).

There is no compromise possible, the alternative is clear: "By associating with the world we become imbued with its spirit. But since this is opposed to the spirit of Christ and both cannot dwell together, if we become impregnated with that of the world, we shall necessarily lose that of Christ" (MF 182,1).

This break with the world is not something exclusive to the Brothers. On the contrary, they have to include it in the teaching they give their pupils: "It is necessary [...] that those who have been entrusted with them should take special care to instruct them according to the Christian spirit, which gives them the wisdom of God [...] which is totally opposed to the spirit and wisdom of this world and for which they must inspire them with great horror" (MR 194,2).

2.6. Not my will but the Father's

Take care "to be always ready to sacrifice all, honour, health and life, for the glory of God" (CL 15,155 = R 15,1,2). De La Salle accepts this radical flight from self which Christ proposes to those who wish to follow him ("Let them deny themselves" Mk 8,34f). The *Rules I have imposed upon myself reflect* his own self-renunciation in his search for the will and glory of God (cf. rules 2,5,8,9). When he proposes the same process to the Brothers, he is careful to do so in the context of identification with Christ, for it is Christ who fulfils in us the will of the Father, it is he who accomplishes God's work through us: "As Our Lord's chief object in coming on earth was the accomplishment of his Father's will [...] he wishes that you also,

who are his members and his vassals, and as such should be united with him, should have this same aim in your actions" (MD 22,1).

The meditations for the beginning of Holy Week, which introduce us to the central mystery of the Redemption, return constantly to the need to become involved in this work, with Christ and in Christ, in the way he did, by seeking and accepting the will of God: "In imitation of your divine Saviour, take care to desire only what God wishes, when he wishes and how he wishes" (MD 24,1). "Endeavour to become a disciple of Jesus in this respect by having no other will but that of God" (MD 24,3).

Without this purification of our own will, the fruit of our ministry would soon be corrupted: "Guard against any human attitude towards your pupils, and let not what you do be a source of pride. Both these things are capable of spoiling all the good that there is in the performance of your duties" (MR 196,3).

2.7. From the condition of a disciple of Jesus Christ to that of Apostle

By this step, we stop being "private" Christians and become involved in the Church's ministry. We move from this comfortable Christianity, at the service of our own needs and personal perfection, to a missionary and witness-bearing type of Christianity, in order to carry out Jesus' plan, that is, the Kingdom of God. Like St Andrew, who "was already a preacher of truth while scarcely as yet a hearer of the divine word. Not content with assuring his own salvation, he sought out companions" (MF 78,2).

The experience of faith and of following Christ leads immediately to burning apostolic zeal and the desire that others know and follow Christ: "It is not enough to be true servants of Christ: you must also make him known and adored by the children you instruct" (MF 182,3).

2.8. From following Christ and, "as an extra", exercising the ministry, to following Christ by exercising the ministry

This shift of perspective completes the previous one. What is involved here is not pursuing our following of Christ in order to make others follow him also, but rather making the following of Christ by oth-

ers the incentive for our own following: "This must be the object of all our striving towards perfection" (MF 182,3). We must "put on Christ" because we have to make our pupils do so. These pupils are the cause of our sanctification: "You are charged by God with the duty of clothing them with Jesus Christ and with giving them his spirit. Have you taken care, before undertaking such a holy ministry, to clothe yourselves with him so as to be able to communicate this grace to them" (MD 189,1; cf. MD 39,2).

2.9. From being a sign of Christ for the poor to looking upon the poor as signs of Christ for oneself

Although De La Salle tells us that we have to be the "ministers of Jesus Christ", his "ambassadors" and "the dispensers of his mysteries for children" (MR 201,2 & 205,1), he does not let these titles go to our head. Instead, he draws our attention to those who are supposed to benefit from the exercise of these roles of which we are so proud, because it is in them that Christ makes himself visible: "Learn to recognise Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to teach. Adore him in their person" (MF 96,3). This is a typical example of a shift of emphasis by De La Salle, revealing the three primary agents in our lives as Christians: ourselves, Jesus Christ, our pupils.

2.10. From belonging to Christ to serve the poor to serving the poor in order to identify oneself with Christ

This shift of perspective makes us accept even more that our ministry is the cause of our sanctification. We have, of course, to be attached "to Jesus Christ, to his doctrine and to his holy maxims" since he has chosen us "to announce them to the children who are his well-beloved" (MF 167,2). But these children, these "images of Jesus Christ" whom we are "required to love" are those who bring us close to Christ: "The more you love them, the more you will belong to Jesus Christ" (MF 173,1).

The merging of these two perspectives is expressed particularly clearly in the meditation for Christmas Day. Conformity with the poor children is identical with conformity with the Saviour: we become "saviours for them" (MF 86,3).

2.11. From living the mystery of Christ to allowing Christ to manifest himself through us by the action of the Spirit

There is a strong insistence in all De La Salle's christology that we should transcend the historical Christ and concentrate on the Christ living in us today through the action of the Spirit. This life is not the historical life of Christ, nor is it his historical actions that have to be reproduced in our own lives today: it is our own life, our ministry exercised with the atti-

tudes — the "spirit" — of Christ. It is not a life re-enacted today: it is the mystery of Christ which continues its existence in our lives and in our ministry.

The primary agent of this "movement" is the Spirit whom Christ "spreads in us. [...] It is this Holy Spirit who animates our actions, who is in them a spirit of life" (CL 14,11 = EM 2,36) and who through us spreads to our pupils "so that they can possess fully the spirit of Christianity" (MR 195,2).

3. "BEING A CHRISTIAN" AND "BEING A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST" AS ONE AND THE SAME PROCESS

3.1. Each one according to the gifts he has received

In the final analysis, there is only one motive for following Christ and becoming identified with him: we have received the gift of knowing the mystery of Christ, we have been chosen by the Father in the person of Christ, who has made us his messengers (cf. Ep 1,3-12; 3,3-12; MR 199,3). We follow Christ only in response to the grace we have received.

When De La Salle proposes this fundamental motive, he makes no distinctions: all Christians are called to follow and imitate Jesus Christ (cf. CL 20,iv = DA 0,0,5). It is worth noting the parallel he draws between what is required of the Brothers in order to acquire the spirit of faith (RC 2,1), and what he writes for all Christians in the preface to RB: "This spirit [of Jesus Christ] is the only one which should inspire all our actions [...] since we should live by the spirit of Jesus Christ, we should be guided also in all things by the same spirit" (CL 19,II = RB 0,0,2).

Each person has to follow Christ according to the gifts he has received (cf. MF 189,1; MR 205,1). Among them, there is "an excellent gift from God", which Christian educators have received, and which is to announce the Gospel to children. This is what motivates them to conform themselves totally to Christ "even to give your life for Jesus in the fulfilment of your ministry" (MR 201,1). Its goal for both teachers and pupils is the "utopia" of the follower of Christ: "that they think often of Jesus [...] that they speak frequently of Jesus, that they aspire only after Jesus and that they breathe only for Jesus" (MF 102,2).

3.2. The motivation of the minister of Jesus Christ

When De La Salle explains the process of identification with Christ, it is as if he were speaking in terms of the two poles of a bar magnet.

One pole is the Brother as a Christian. The second is the Brother as "the minister of Jesus Christ", "his representative", the sacrament of Christ, from which there arises the need to become identified with Christ, or rather, to allow oneself to become united with him, because this, above all, is a gift he makes to us: "As you are obliged by your duty of state to instruct children, you ought to be thoroughly impregnated with the Christian spirit in order to be able to impart it to them" (MF 132,1; Cf. MR 195,3).

Both poles are present in the Brother: "Do you not bear in vain the name of Christian and Minister of Jesus Christ in the function you exercise?" (MF 93,3).

Between the two poles, De La Salle establishes a number of "force fields":

1. The fact of being a Christian imposes the obligation of imitating Christ, in general terms, in his entire mystery. However, the ministry of the Brother emphasises specific "mysteries, virtues and maxims" of Jesus Christ, whose spirit he has to possess in a special manner.

2. Being a Christian implies, for a Brother, bearing witness to his faith (cf. MF 84,3), an obligation which applies also to his Christian pupils. However, by virtue of his ministry, he should be able to say like St Paul: "Join in imitating me, and observe those who

live according to the example you have in us" (Ph 3,16). Moreover, in doing so, he should imitate Jesus Christ who, after washing his disciples' feet, said to them: "For I have set you an example that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13,15). It is "the zeal for the salvation of the children under your guidance" which should lead Christian educators to practise what they preach, since children "ordinarily model themselves on the example of their teachers" (MR 202,3).

3. Like all Christians, the Brother should resemble his Saviour by carrying his cross, accepting the sufferings that life brings, for the love of God: "Do you like to suffer for God's sake in a similar manner? Remember that it is our pleasure in enduring something in conformity with Christ crucified and to please God, that shows most clearly our love of God" (MF 130,3; cf. 121,3; 165). "For we are Christian only in so far as we resemble our divine Saviour, and it is the love of suffering and mortification that renders us like him" (MF 176,3).

The ministry of the Brother emphasises in a special way this relationship with the Saviour suffering on the cross and the need to imitate him and become united with him so as to fulfil adequately the mission he has received (Cf. MR 201).

3.3. The Christian educator: a unified life

As the minister of Jesus Christ — the Brother, the Christian educator — walks in the footsteps of his Master, he quickly becomes aware that his commitment needs an historical and real context: he is not a Christian in abstract terms to which has been added the role of "minister of the Word": rather, he fulfils himself as a Christian in his own real life, as a minister and representative of Christ, through his mission to children and young people.

If we follow Jesus, we follow him specifically, participating in his plan of salvation in the ministerial field of Christian education. It is logical that, what is seen at first as imitating the model Jesus, should end by being lived interiorly, as a participation in the unique mystery which is the incarnate Christ.

In the light of this, we realise that the real motive De La Salle gives for beginning and pursuing this process of "approximation" to Christ is not the perfection of the Brother, nor his identity as a Christian, nor the

fact that he is a consecrated person. The real motive is "them", the young people for whom he represents Christ, for whom he is making present the mystery of salvation. The young people, to whom the Brother has been sent, make him discover what it really means to be a Christian and a consecrated person ("I sanctify myself for them..." Jn 17,19; cf. MD 39,2). Through them he sees himself becoming part of the history of salvation, acting as a free, faithful and creative "instrument" in the accomplishment of God's plan, in bringing about his Kingdom (Cf. MR 196,1). Through them and God's initiative, he finds himself introduced into the mystery of Christ, and he has no choice but to surrender all the fruit of his actions to the power and strength of Christ, or rather, to the Spirit of Christ who acts in him (cf. MR 195,3; CL 46,99).

De La Salle invites the Brother to understand more clearly what he is doing in his ministry: it is not teaching doctrine, however sublime it may be, but rather "procuring the Christian spirit for children [...] which is the spirit of Jesus Christ himself (MR 196,3). He shows him that what he is doing is "giving life". And so, the words of the Brother become "spirit and life for them" (MR 196,1). But this does not come about simply from an external imitation of Jesus. He must make his "views and intentions" (MR 196,3) his own. He must allow himself "to be animated by his Spirit" (MR 196,1), even "surrendering himself to the Spirit of Jesus Christ [...] and acting only under his influence" (MR 195,2). In this way, to his surprise, the Brother finds he is taking the place of Jesus Christ for his pupils. This was De La Salle's experience too with regard to his Brothers (cf. CL 10,114f = EP 3,0,7), and he invites them to act accordingly: "Let them receive your teaching as if he [Jesus Christ] were giving it to them" (MR 195,2).

"The Spirit acts in you and by you through the power of Jesus Christ" (MR 195,2). The "work" that the Brother carries out and for which he has been chosen (MR 205,1) is nothing less than "the work of our redemption" which "it is up to each one of us to complete and accomplish" (MR 195,1). De La Salle places the Brother at the centre of the Christian mystery, in which his role as a Christian and his role as a "minister of Jesus Christ" become one and give deep unity to his life.

"In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's sufferings" (Col 1,24). De La Salle uses these words

of St Paul to summarise participation in the Christian mystery (MR 195,1), and the Brother hears them for himself only as an echo, because De La Salle applies them in the first place to his pupils: "You must lead them to unite all their actions to those of Jesus Christ Our Lord" (MR 195,1). And so, as the Brother exer-

cises his ministry, he can ascertain the authenticity of his Christian life, and perceive that there is no qualitative difference between what he should seek in his students, by virtue of his ministry, and what he should achieve in himself, by virtue of being a Christian and a disciple of Christ.

Complementary themes		
Apostle	God	Redemption
Christian	God's role	Renewal
Church	God's work	Renunciation
Conversion	Incarnation	Salvation
Counsels	Ministry	Spirit of Christianity
Disciples	Mystery	Spirit of the world
Faith (spirit of)	Prayer	World

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81. INSTRUCTION(S), INSTRUCTING (CHILDREN)

Summary

Insert: "Profession of the ten articles of faith a Christian is obliged to believe and to know" (CL 23,430 = GA 0,32).

1. The Brother instructs himself or is instructed.

2. The subject matter of instructions: what children are instructed in

2.1. Instructing in secular subjects 2.2. Instructing in matters to do with salvation 2.2.1. Instruction and the word of God 2.2.2. Instruction and the principal mysteries of faith 2.2.3. Instruction and knowledge of God 2.2.4. Instruction and practice 2.2.5. Instruction and the sacraments 2.2.6. Instruction, prayer and piety 2.2.7. Instruction and sin 2.2.8. Instruction and catechism.

3. Instructing: the role of the teacher

3.1. The ministry of brotherhood 3.2. Discerning, accompanying, teaching: meditation 33.

4. Conclusion

Instructing builds up the Church, obtains salvation and God's glory.

5. Appendices

5.1. Use of the terms "instruction" and "to instruct" in 17th century French 5.1.1. Instruction 5.1.2. To instruct 5.2. Instruction(s), to instruct: titles of manuals or chapter headings in De La Salle's writings.

1. THE BROTHER INSTRUCTS HIMSELF OR IS INSTRUCTED

In the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, "to instruct" and "instruction(s)" are used in reference to the **relationship between God and the Brother** in prayer. God instructs, he gives his instructions. This enables the Brother to discover the virtues he needs to practise and to achieve holiness. The verb "to instruct" is used twice also in a comparison between the explanations of an artist and the method of mental prayer.

"To instruct" and "instruction(s)" are used also with reference to the **professional training of the Brother**. Here the sense is clearly apostolic: the Brother instructs himself in order to be able to instruct the children. The material in which he has to instruct himself constitutes the subject matter of his instructions to the children, and determines the methods he uses.

Instruction takes place **in mental prayer** (MR 200,1,2; MF 108,1,2; MF 116,2,2; MF 164,1,2) at times fixed by the Rule (MR 206,1,2). This draws down God's grace on his studies and mission (MR 200,1,2). These studies consist essentially **in reading**

and meditating on the Scriptures, in particular on the Gospel, on the sayings and example of the Apostles (MR 200,1,2; MF 84,3,2; MF 116,1,2; MF 116,2,2; MF 153,1,2). The Brother instructs himself "in the truths and holy maxims" (MR 200,1,2; MF 116,1,2; MF 116,2,2), in the things he has to teach (MR 206,1,2), in the truths of the faith (MF 84,3,2; MF 153,1,2; MF 164,1,2) and in Christian doctrine (MF 120,1,2).

In MR 200,1,1 De La Salle describes **the apostolic work of Jesus and his disciples** so that it can serve as a model for the Brothers. They must study it in order to imitate it: "You must fulfil your ministry as the Apostles fulfilled theirs, following in this their example, which is that of Jesus Christ himself: day after day they went about without ceasing, teaching and announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ". Jesus himself "taught every day in the temple [...] leaving at night to go and pray". In MF 116,1,2 the model proposed to the Brother is the apostolic work of St

Peter and St Mark. MR 206 states that he must study in order to instruct young people: "How to assist at Holy Mass and to confess their sins properly, [...] the things that contribute to the support of religion [...] without neglecting reading, writing and arithmetic [...] the catechism that has to be taught every day at the

prescribed time, [...] what is suited to their age and ability to know".

These studies are solely to prepare for the mission: "To teach those entrusted to your care" (MR 206,1,2), "to teach others" (MF 108,1,2), "to inspire those entrusted to you" (MF 116,2,2).

2. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF INSTRUCTIONS: WHAT CHILDREN ARE INSTRUCTED IN

2.1. Instructing in secular subjects

The terms "to instruct" and "instructions" can refer, but only very rarely, exclusively and explicitly to secular subjects.

When the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* speaks of parents who neglect to send their children to school, "instructing" is clearly used with reference to the skill of reading and the future employment of their children: "Make them aware of the obligation they are under to have their children instructed, and the wrong they do them by not having them taught how to read and write. Tell them how much this can harm them, and that they will never be able to do any job if they cannot read or write. Next you must tell them about the harm that can be done to their children by the lack of instructions regarding their salvation, something that the poor rarely come into contact with" (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,18; Cf. CL 24,36 = CE 3,7,1).

We see that the verb "to instruct" refers to "learning how to read and write", and "instructions" refer to "things to do with salvation". If either is lacking, the children are wronged.

"Instruction" refers to reading and writing in the following fine passage from the *Conduct of Schools*: "Parents need to be told that when they withdraw their children from school at too early an age and before they are sufficiently instructed, to send them off to work, they harm them greatly. For the sake of making them earn very little they make them forego an advantage that is much greater. To make them understand this, you must show them how important it is for an artisan to know how to read and write, since, even if he is not very intelligent, but knows how to read and write, he is capable of doing everything" (CL 24,187 = CE 16,2,21).

"Being instructed" was used here with reference to professional employment and reading and writing. "Being instructed" opens up new horizons for the children of artisans.

In the *Conduct of Schools*, it is clear that the school has to satisfy parents regarding secular subjects. In this connection De La Salle insists on the professional competence of the young teachers: "It may happen that parents will complain that their children are learning nothing, or very little, and want to withdraw their children from the school for this reason. To avoid such an unfortunate event, Brother Directors and the Inspectors should supervise very carefully all the teachers for whom they are responsible, especially those with less ability, and ensure that they instruct with the greatest possible attention all the pupils in their charge, without neglecting any, and that the attention they give to all the pupils is equal, and even greater to the most ignorant and negligent" (CL 24,188 = CE 16,2,22).

In the *Memoir on the Habit*, the student teachers for country schools "are instructed so that they sing, read and write perfectly" (MH 0,0,6), while "the young children, who are inclined and disposed towards piety [...] are instructed in all the subjects in the catechism, and are taught to read and write perfectly" (MH 0,0,7).

In MR 206,1,2, we read that "instruction in secular subjects, such as reading, writing and arithmetic", even if it is not the most important function of the Brother, "is a serious obligation". And in MF 91,3,2, the Founder writes: "Have you taught your pupils all the other subjects, such as reading, writing and the rest, with all possible earnestness?"

MF 92,3,1 includes points of teaching methodology which form part of the Brothers' special examination of conscience or annual end-of-year

evaluation: "Have you been careful during the past year to follow the timetable" (Cf. CL 24,16f = CE 3,1f), "to use the hand signal always" (Cf. CL 24,124 = CE 12,0,1f), "and always to correct the pupils when they make a mistake?" (Cf. CL 24,35 = CE 3,6,6).

Margaret, Queen of Scotland, "herself performed the function of tutor to her children, giving them reading lessons" (MF 133,2,1).

From what has been said, therefore, it should be remembered that "to instruct" and "instruction" can sometimes, and above all in the *Conduct of Schools*, refer to secular subjects. When they are specified, these subjects are reading, writing, arithmetic, training for a profession, or preparation for an employment.

2.2. Instructing in matters to do with salvation

In practice, however, De La Salle uses the verb "to instruct" almost exclusively in a religious context: morality, catechesis, Gospel, Christian life. The instruction of children involves "things a Christian is obliged to know concerning both doctrine and practice" (CL 24,104 = CE 9,3,10), or Christian life as a whole (CL 20,124 = DA 206,0,4).

2.2.1. INSTRUCTION AND THE WORD OF GOD

Instruction is rooted in the word of God, in particular in the New Testament (MF 170,1,2), "in order to receive Jesus Christ and his holy maxims" (MD 2, title). The Brothers bring up their pupils "in piety and in a true Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel" (RC 2,10; CL 15,75 = R 11,1,6). It is the means of giving them "the true spirit of Christianity" (MF 159,1,2). To make up for a lack of instruction, they need to be given "the spirit of Christianity" and brought up according to "the maxims of the Gospel". Instruction understood in this sense brings about a change of behaviour in children and helps them to give up their dissolute ways: "You have an easy way of showing it in the instruction you give your pupils, by teaching them the truths and maxims of the Gospel, and by strongly opposing all that savours of wildness in their conduct" (MF 140,1,2).

It offers an opportunity to instruct, reprove, correct and lead to piety children who are confided to you (MF 192,1,2), to make them practise the Christian virtues (MR 194,3,2). It brings about a change of life (MR 207,2,2; MR 207,3,1). This is the science of

the saints (MF 167,2,2), linked to catechism, a function similar to that of the Apostles: "It is your privilege to share in the Apostolic mission by giving religious instruction every day to the boys entrusted to you, and by explaining the truths of the Gospel to them" (MF 159,2,2).

In MD 44,1, the Founder puts the beatitudes at the heart of this instruction. He does not hesitate to offer as a model to the children of the artisans and the poor the Gospel in all its radicality, because he believes that they, like all baptised Christians, are capable of understanding and responding to the message of Jesus Christ, inspired as they are by the Holy Spirit of God. In "secular matters" (See 2,1 above) as in "matters related to God", De La Salle believes in the potential of young people.

"The truths that the Holy Spirit teaches those who receive him are the maxims of the Gospel. These he makes us understand and relish, and take as the guiding principle of our life and actions. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can make us understand them, and who can lead us efficaciously to practise them, for they are above the human intellect. Indeed, how could we possibly know, for instance, that 'Blessed are the poor', that we must 'love our enemies', that we should 'be glad and hghthearted when people revile us, persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us', that we must 'do good to them that hate us', and a great number of similar truths completely contrary to what nature suggests, unless the Spirit of God taught us himself? It is your duty to teach these truths to the children confided to your care" (MD 44,2). "Being instructed in the Gospel" is always with a view to adopting a new type of behaviour and way of acting.²

2.2.2. INSTRUCTION AND THE PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH

The theoretical aspect of intellectual knowledge to be learned and memorised has its place in De La Salle's presentation of instruction. In this he shares in the thinking of his day regarding pastoral care: one cannot be saved without knowing in a detailed and explicit manner the principal mysteries of religion, the commandments of God and of the Church, the sacraments with their chief characteristics and implications, the way to pray, etc. This instruction is necessary and even indispensable for the reception of the sacraments (see 2.2.5 below).

Profession of the ten articles of faith a Christian is obliged to believe and to know

1.1 believe that there is only one God and that there cannot be several.

2.1 believe that there are three persons in God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that these three persons are only one God and not three Gods, because they have the same nature and the same divinity.

3.1 believe that the Son of God, the second person of the most Holy Trinity, became man for the love of us, and died on a cross to atone to God for our sins, to deliver us from the sufferings of hell, and to make us deserve eternal life.

4.1 believe that those who lead a good life in this world and who die in God's grace will be rewarded after their death, and that their reward will be to be eternally happy in heaven, seeing God as he is. 5.1 believe that those who lead a bad life and die in a state of mortal sin will be damned, that is, they will never see God and that they will burn for eternity in hell.

6.1 believe that there are ten commandments of God and that we are obliged to observe them all, and that we are obliged to obey the Church also, whose commandments for us are normally six in number. 7.1 believe that it is enough to commit a single mortal sin and to die in this state to be damned. 8.1 believe that it is necessary to have frequent recourse to prayer and that we cannot be saved without praying to God.

9.1 believe that there are seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders and marriage.

10. I believe that baptism wipes out original sin and all actual sins, and makes us Christians; that the eucharist contains the body, blood, soul and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine; and that penance forgives all the sins we have committed since baptism.

(CL 23,430 = GA 0,32)

Instruction is a necessary condition for belonging to the Church: "There are those who sin against faith and who are considered to belong only to the body of the Church: these are those who profess [...] certain heretical notions, [...] who willingly doubt some article of faith, [...] who are ignorant of the principal mysteries of our religion and of the commandments of God and of the Church, and who do not have themselves instructed in them"³ (CL 20,113 ~ DA 203,0,16).

Sometimes the language is such that one could conclude that faith consisted in simply understanding the faith — a series of formulas. The *Long Summary* (GA), a large abridged catechism, includes a "Profession of the ten articles of faith a Christian is obliged to believe and to know". What is immediately obvious is the connection that is made between **believing and knowing**. The text concludes by saying that this instruction is linked also to eternal salvation: "It is necessary to become instructed in all these things in order to be in a state to deserve and to obtain eternal salvation" (CL 23,431 = GA 0,32,5).

The fact that certain things are mentioned and others are not gives an insight into the contents of instruction :

- art. 1 & 2 : on the nature of God.
- art. 3 : on the role of Jesus: the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption, but no mention of the resurrection.
- art. 4: on salvation (begins in art. 3).
- art. 5 and 7: on hell, damnation, mortal sin (also begins in art. 3).
- art. 6: the commandments of God and the Church (simply referred to, but not listed).
- art. 8 : prayer and salvation.
- art. 9 & 10: the sacraments.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only in 2, as a member of the Trinity, and the Church in 6, in connection with its commandments. Confirmation is mentioned as one of the seven sacraments. On the other hand, such concepts as salvation, sin and hell are referred to much more frequently (art. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10). There is no mention of the Word of God. Doctrine is based on knowledge which is beyond the grasp of the faithful: the nature of God (art. 1 & 2). The notion of obligation is invoked (art. 6) as well as that of fear — of sin, hell and damnation.

On the other hand, this Christian faith is presented as the cause and fruit of a conversion of heart, inspired by the Spirit. It is founded on the Word of God,

as the *Duties of a Christian* explains at some length. This faith manifests itself in a whole series of practices and ways of acting which show that there really has been a change in a person's life: prayer, sacraments (MR 200,2,2), good works, piety, modesty, simplicity, humility, respect for parents (MR 200,3,2; MF 134,3,2; MR 207,2,2). For De La Salle, knowledge is expressed in practice.⁴

2.2.3. INSTRUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The knowledge of God is one of the elements on which Lasallian education focuses.

The Holy Trinity: the knowledge of it brings teachers and pupils together because both are consecrated to the Trinity in baptism: "By baptism, these children are, like you, consecrated to the Most Blessed Trinity. They bear the marks of this consecration in their soul" (MD 46,3,1). "This divine mystery [...] is the mystery above all others, and the source and principle of all the rest" (MD46,1,2); also "It is only right, therefore, that you, whose duty it is to unfold this mystery to them as far as the light of faith permits, should acknowledge it as the source of all faith, the mainstay of our faith, the very foundation of our religion" (MD 46,3,1).

The mystery of the Trinity which is placed at the beginning (art. 1 & 2) of the *credo* presented above, is the basic theme of all instruction: "The knowledge of the three Divine Persons. If you obtain this from God you will have ample provision wherewith to satisfy those who apply to you in their need of instruction" (MD 37,2,2).

The Trinity is the foundation on which the Church is built: "For you lay the foundation for the building of the Church when you instruct children in the mystery of the most Holy Trinity and the mysteries accomplished by Jesus Christ when he was on earth" (MR 199,1,2).

God: Instructing makes God known. The Apostles were instructed in his ways on Tabor (MD 18,2,2). The teacher, for his part, reveals to children that God is love; he instills this love into their heart (MD 39,1,2). To love God and to know him go together: "You sometimes have to instruct children who know nothing about God, [...] to make him known to others and loved by all those to whom you have made him known" (MD 41,3,2).

To do this, the teacher must be "competent in the

art of speaking to God, of God, and for God" (MD 64,2,2). He acquires this competence first of all by prayer (MF 189,1,2). He makes God reign in hearts (MD 67,2,2), discovering the truth about God and obtaining salvation (MR 197,1,2).

Jesus Christ is revealed as the Good Shepherd (MD 33), who is the teacher's model (see 3.3 below). He gave himself to his Apostles to whom he entrusted "the mission of founding and establishing the Church through the preaching of the Gospel" (CL 22,92 = DC 30,8,3). Hearts must be prepared for his coming, to receive him (MD 2, title; MD 2,2,2; MD 3,1,2). This knowledge comes about through love, which is communicated through the holy name of Jesus (MF 102,2,2). To be instructed about Jesus Christ means also to adore him and the mysteries which he accomplished for our salvation (MF 182,3,2).

The Holy Spirit: He himself instructs the faithful after instructing the Apostles (CL 22,231 = DC 44,6,6).

2.2.4. INSTRUCTION AND PRACTICE

Instructing is closely linked to practice: the teacher knows that knowing is not enough: "In each of his catechism lessons he will not fail to suggest some practices to his pupils, and to instruct them as thoroughly as possible about morals and the way they must behave in order to live as true Christians" (CL 24,102 = CE 9,3,4).

"In order to make the children you teach adopt the spirit of Christianity, you must teach them the practical truths of faith in Jesus Christ and the maxims of the Gospel with at least as much care as you teach the truths that are purely doctrinal" (MR 194,3,2).

"Is your main concern, then, to instruct your disciples in the maxims of the Holy Gospel and the practice of Christian virtues? Have you anything more at heart than helping them to find happiness in their practice?" (MR 194,3,2).

It is clear that what is important here is not intelligence, but the heart and affection. The duty of parents is involved here. In the *Duties of a Christian*, instruction heads the list and "making them live as good Christians" comes in third place as one of their duties (CL 21,241 = DB 2,23,8).

"Q. What must fathers and mothers do in order to bring up their children in the fear and love of God? A. They must do three things: 1° instruct them, 2° correct them, 3° make them live as good Christians".

De La Salle insists on the quality of Christian life, because instruction and learning, etc., are not to do initially with theoretical knowledge, but with ways of living: Children need teachers so that "these teachers can teach them to lead good lives by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion, inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus giving them the education suited to their needs" (RC 1,3).⁵

-Teach them "the rules of a Christian life, and the means by which they may secure their eternal salvation" (MF 87,2,2). This instruction takes place by winning over hearts: this is what leads young people to God (MF 115,3,2). Matters to do with morals and the way one should behave in order to lead a truly Christian life are things that are learnt.

To lead a Christian life means:

- to show charity to one's companions (MD 69,1,2; MR 198,3,2).

- to have good morals (MD 60,3,1 & 2; MR 196,2,1 & 2; MR 200,3).

- to be modest (MD 60,3,2; MR 200,3,2).

- to avoid bad companions and to choose good ones (MD 33,3,1; MD 37,2,1; MD 56,2,2; MD 60,3,1; MF 111,3,2; MF 114,2,2; MF 126,1,2; MR 194,1,1; MR 205,3,1; MR 206,2,2).

- to love and practise piety (MD 60,3,2; MD 69,1,2; MR 200,3,2).

- to become converted: "If you want to fulfil your ministry as guardian angels for the children you teach, making them holy and perfect, building up by them the body of Christ and **to make them holy and perfect**, you must work to inspire them with the same sentiments and to put them in the same dispositions which St Paul tried to achieve in the Ephesians through the letter he wrote to them.

"1. That they do not sadden the Holy Spirit of God with whom they have been sealed in baptism and confirmation against the day of redemption.

"2. You would be deserving of blame if you did not encourage them to lay aside their former way of life. You must, therefore, be equally zealous in making them give up lying and, instead, always saying the truth when speaking with their neighbour.

"3. They should be gentle with one another, showing compassion and mutual forgiveness, just as God pardoned them through Jesus Christ. They should love one another in the same way as Jesus Christ has loved them. Is this the way you have taught your disciples up to the present? Are these the maxims with which you have inspired them? Have you had enough vigilance over them, and has your zeal been ardent enough to induce

them to practise these maxims ? Put all your effort in the future into being faithful in these matters" (MR 198,3).

Conduct is Christian when it conforms to what Jesus Christ and the Apostles taught and practised.⁶

2.2.5. INSTRUCTION AND THE SACRAMENTS

There is great insistence on the sacraments in the various catechisms written by De La Salle, as well as in the *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass, Confession and Communion*. The reception of the sacraments in the Catholic religion calls for detailed and precise instruction. De La Salle includes even liturgical aspects in his treatment of this topic. The sacraments are an important element in leading the type of Christian life described earlier. They are also one of the explicit ways of showing one's membership of the Church and one's identity as a Christian.

"The chief care, then, of the Apostles, after teaching the first faithful, was to have them receive the sacraments, assemble for prayer together, and live according to the Christian spirit" (MR 200,2,1).

The sacraments serve also to draw a person away from sin and bad habits and to protect him against them (MD 56,3,2; MR 198,2,1; MR 200,2,2; RC 1,6). The ceremonies need to be made comprehensible to the children and explained to them (CL 20,209 = DA 301,2,12f). This is the role of De La Salle's catechisms: the *Duties of a Christian*, the *Abridged Catechisms* and the *Instructions for Holy Mass and Confession*.

Baptism is not dealt with at great length, relatively speaking. Adult or adolescent baptisms were exceptional at the time, and children would hear about them only from textbooks. Being baptised implied evangelising others, even where children were concerned. In their case, this dimension was shown to be part of their Christian identity (DA 105,2,5; DA 302; DA 309,1,13; DB 3,3).

Confirmation was received quite young, on reaching the age of reason and, in any case, before first communion (CL 20,233f = DA 303; CL 21,166f = DB 3,6).

"Q. Can all children who have reached the age of reason be confirmed?

A. Yes, providing they are sufficiently instructed and have the will to become perfect Christians, and enough discernment to take the means to become so" (CL 21,169 = DB 3,6,6).

One has to be sufficiently instructed and perform all the actions of a true Christian without human respect (Cf. MR 198,3,1 et MR 200,2,2 which associate confirmation with baptism).

The Eucharist. *The Long Summary* advocates the age of 12 for first communion (CL 23,373 = GA 0,17,6; CL 21,116 = DB 2,12,2; Cf. CL 17,5f = I 1,2).

"You must dispose them to receive their first communion with holy dispositions and to go to communion frequently thereafter in order to preserve the grace they received the first time they performed this action" (MR 200,2,2. Cf. MR 206, 1, 2).

The period between the ages of 7 and 12, that is, between confirmation and communion, was more or less the age range catered for by the "Christian and Gratuitous Schools". By the age of 12, the young Christian had received all the sacraments of Christian initiation and was considered to be an adult. It was the age also when the children of artisans began their working life by becoming apprentices to one or other master craftsman.

Penance. The way in which a person was envisaged in those days, the insistence on his sinful nature, the important role of sin in salvation (see GAO, 32 and the credo it proposes) give this sacrament an excessively dominant role in pastoral thinking and Lasallian catechisms. Penance is also often linked with communion and seen as preceding it. See the *Instructions and Prayers* as well as the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, which link them as a matter of course (MR 200,2,2; MR 206,1,2; Cf. CL 17,102f = 1,2).

Matrimony and the conditions for marrying: "Another disposition required by the Church is that those who wish to marry should be instructed in the principal mysteries of our religion, and know the following: the three prayers, *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and / *believe*, the commandments of God and the Church, the seven sacraments, especially what concerns the sacrament of baptism, and the words one must pronounce when one gives it, the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, and what relates to the sacrament of marriage and the duties of this state" (CL 20,388 = DA 310,3,7; Cf. CL 21,239 = DB 3,23,4).⁷

Holy Orders: "There was a need to have in the Church officers and ministers of Jesus Christ to offer to God the sacrifice of the Eucharist, to administer the sacraments to the faithful, and instruct them in their

religion and their duties" (CL 20,365 = DA 309,1,1; cf. all of chap. IX).⁸

2.2.6. INSTRUCTION, PRAYER AND PIETY

Prayer is a Christian practice which is necessary in order to achieve salvation:

"8. I believe that it is necessary to have frequent recourse to prayer and that one cannot be saved without praying to God" (CL 23,431 = GA 0,32,3).

The *Instructions and Prayers* contain model prayers, which serve also as a means of instruction (I 1,1,4), the *Duties of a Christian* treat prayer at some length, while the *Conduct of Schools* punctuates the day (and even the school year) with prayers. Praying was organised with a view to preparing pupils for a life of prayer. One has to be instructed in order to know what to ask in prayer, to whom to address one's prayer (CL 20,442f = DA 403). Prayer for the needs of the Church is explicit (CL 22,36 = DC 20,4,3). Prayer enables a person to turn away from sin, to preserve grace (RC 2,9; MD 56,3,1; MD 60,3,2). It is associated with the sacraments (MR 200,2,1), with piety, devotion, modesty (MD 60,3,2) and, in MF 155,1,1, prayer is associated with the fear of God. Prayer is also an activity characteristic of a Christian (MF 134,3,2). It is an indication that he is really living according to the Gospel (RC 2,10) and that he has been affected by the Christian education he received: "The children whom you instruct are well behaved, know their religion well, and are pious" (MR 207,2,2).⁹

2.2.7. INSTRUCTION AND SIN

Instruction takes on a practical character when it deals with faults to avoid. There are ordinary sins and sins against the Holy Spirit: "As these sins (the seven capital sins) are quite common in the world, it is proper that the faithful should be instructed about them in order to either preserve themselves from them or, if there are some they already commit, to turn away from them" (CL 20,168 = DA 214,0,1).

"Apart from capital sins or vices, there are also three other sorts of sins they should be instructed about: these are the sins said to be against the Holy Spirit, those that are seen as crying to God for vengeance, and those one commits by sharing in the sins of others" (CL 20,180 = DA 215,0,1).

Instruction should give a horror for sin, vice, gambling, dissipation and dissoluteness. Instruction turns

a person away from sin and preserves innocence (MD 56,3,2; MD 60,3).¹⁰

Children need to be warned about the danger of bad company, taught to choose good companions who are modest, reserved, well-behaved and pious (MF 126,1,2). Instruction helps to fight against distractions in church, an obstacle to true prayer (Cf. 2,2,7). Children who lead a disordered life are encouraged to change their ways by instruction (RC 2,9; CL 15,75 = R 11,1,6).

2.2.8 INSTRUCTION AND CATECHISM

Catechism is the activity by which the Brother instructs, in the most positive sense of the term: "Of the obligation the Brothers of this Society have to acquit themselves well of their duties in school, to instruct well the children there, to teach them catechism well and to induce them to be pious and show them the way to be so" (CL 15,69 = R 10,2,28).

Catechism is the principal activity of the school day. It is given at the end of the afternoon or morning, as the need arises, so as to ensure that it takes place. No pupil can be dispensed from it, and those who come to school for only half the school day must

come in the afternoon so as to attend the catechism lesson (CL 24,97f = CE 9). Catechism must take place each day (MF 159,2,2).

Catechism has a role in the life of the Church which entrusts this task to the Brothers: "Not one of your boys should be ignorant of his faith. This is the chief reason why the Church has confided them to you. You should consider yourself as a depository of the faith which you have to impart to those confided to your care. Such is the treasure which God places in your hands, and of which you are the steward" (MD 61,2,1; Cf. MR 199,2,1 & 2; MR 199,3,2).

Catechism has a role to play in the lives of the children: it adapts itself to their needs, proposes a way of life to them which involves turning away from sin, modesty, piety and practices suited to their age and situation (MR 200). Catechism means imparting knowledge: of the Gospel, mysteries, commandments, sacraments (MD 61,2,1 & 2; MF 79,3,2). A good book can still serve as a means of Christian instruction (CL 20,121 = DA 205,0,6). Primary responsibility for catechising rests with parents, or by default, with godfathers, godmothers and guardians (CL 20,125 = DA 206,0,5; CL 20,127 = DA 206,0,12-13; CL 20,225 = DA 302,3,8).

3. INSTRUCTING: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

3.1. The ministry of brotherhood

Attention is drawn a number of times to the importance of the personal example of the teacher in the process of instruction. Instruction cannot be reduced to imparting knowledge by talking about it. Christian life is something to be shared, to be given through human relationships. This is where the "ministry of brotherhood" comes in: being an elder Brother to the pupils, which is one of the characteristics of Lasallian education. (See present *Rule 53* & MR 202,3).

Care must be taken that all children are instructed, that the school is well run, that there are many children there to hear the message of salvation (LA 58,20). These children are the object of the Brothers' prayer, in particular of their community prayer (MR 198,1,2).

Thus we read in EM 2,37 :

- "By your **presence in our midst**, gathered to pray to you. [...]"

- "To have an intimate union of mind and heart with my Brothers. [...]"

- "Having received your divine Spirit. [...] May I allow myself to be guided by him in order to fulfil the duties of my state and that he may make me participate in your zeal for the instruction of those whom you will wish to entrust to my care" (CL 14,11f).

By his regular life, the Brother edifies the children, encourages them to live piously and to be modest and well-behaved (MF 153,2,2). He learns regularity through mental prayer (MF 78,2,2) and demonstrates it by his attachment to poverty (MF 86,3,2). As a teacher, he prepares his lessons (MF 91,3,1) in response to God's call to this holy work (MF 93,3,2).

He needs also to have a solid piety and to withdraw from the world (MF 120,2,2), giving himself to God, "as it were, soul for soul", in his ministry, in the place of those whom he teaches, offering his life in witness to the absolute (MF 137,3,2). Instructing

involves showing kindness and affection for the children (MF 134,2,2) as part of a process which involves mental prayer and mortification (MF 153,1,2) and self-control regarding anger, violent emotions, bad temper (MF 155,2,2). In this way the Brother becomes the spiritual father of these children whom he begets in Jesus Christ (MF 157,1,2).

The Brother is guided by faith (MF 178,1,2). Faith is the light that guides teachers and pupils along the path to heaven. What is essential is to give suitable attention to each individual child, according as he is dissolute, inclined to be good or evil, or is naturally good (MF 186,3,2).

3.2. Discerning, accompanying, teaching: meditation 33

The texts from Holy Scripture describe the Brother's ministry to children:

1st point. "For those in charge of souls, taking great care of the sheep means knowing each one individually". **Discerning and guiding.**

2nd point. "So that the sheep know their shepherd and therefore can follow him". The task of those "employed to instruct others" is to **accompany** them, to walk with the sheep. To be able to do this, the teacher must be **virtuous and tender** towards the children he teaches.

3rd point. "It is an obligation on the part of the sheep of Jesus Christ to listen to the voice of their shepherd, [...] it is your daily duty, therefore, to teach the children confided to your care".

This educational process is not envisaged in vague terms: prayer is complemented by the practical approach of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*:

- "Some require greater mildness, while others need to be directed with firmness.
- "Some require much patience; others need to be goaded on.
- "It is necessary to punish and reprehend some, in order to correct their defects.
- "Others need to be continually watched lest they should wander and perish" (MD 33,1,1).

The face of God which is revealed to the children through the Brother is that of a God who is close to them, who accompanies them, who loves them and takes care of them: "This is one of the most important characteristics you must have in order to accompany the children entrusted to you" (MD 33,1,2).

The great tenderness of the teacher is the central theme of MD 33,2 and therefore of the whole of meditation 33: "They should manifest great tenderness for the souls confided to them. [...] In this manner, the sheep will love their shepherd and take pleasure in his company" (MD 33,2,1).

"The duty to teach the children confided to your care", involves giving them "instructions suited to their capacity" (MD 33,3,1), otherwise this work would serve no purpose. Instruction is at the service of the word of God (the reference to the Good Shepherd):

- "Make your questions and answers easily understandable during catechism.
- "Explain them clearly [...]
- "Use words that are easy to understand [...]
- "Point out their faults simply.
- "Give them the means to correct them.
- "Teach them about the virtues suited to their age and show them how easy they are.
- "Inspire them with great horror for sin, and teach them to avoid bad company [...]
- "Speak to them of everything that can induce them to be pious" (MD 33,3,1).

The teacher needs to be trained to make himself understood by the children: "You must study". "To teach the children, [...] give them instructions suited to their capacity" means, quite clearly, to teach them catechism, to explain it, give exhortations, point out, give the means, teach, inspire, speak... It is a list that encompasses the whole life of a Christian, and this is the life that De La Salle means when he speaks of instructing. Children are made to learn their catechism in order to lead Christian lives in a way that fits in with the reality of the world in which they live: "The virtues suited to their age, [...] the bad company, [...] everything that can induce them to be pious" (MD 33,3,1).

Meditation 33 highlights the main characteristics of the spirituality of a teacher in the exercise of his ministry. It shows how his teaching work is the object of his prayers. These characteristics are as follows :

Knowing individually all those confided to your care, **and discerning** the way you should act towards them, in order to make them know themselves, and realise how much God loves them.

Accompanying young people by the personal example of your virtue and of the good you do. **Showing great tenderness** towards them and being sensi-

live to what they need for salvation, so that they can become true disciples of Jesus Christ, loving the teacher who leads them to him, and taking pleasure in his company.

Teaching them to lead a Christian life with all its practices, respecting their situation, and taking into account the social background, relationships and specific characteristics of the children.

4. CONCLUSION: INSTRUCTING BUILDS UP THE CHURCH, OBTAINS SALVATION AND GOD'S GLORY

Instructing children is God's will, desire and call: "It is God who called you to this ministry" (MR 193,2,2); the teachers that "are given them for their instruction" (MR 194,2,1). Associated with God's work, the Brothers become "co-operators of Jesus Christ (MR 195, title); it is "a holy employment" (MR 201, title). The purpose of this employment and this work is **the salvation of children**. Instructing them puts them "on the path to heaven" (MR 200,3,2), makes them become "the heirs of the kingdom of Jesus Christ Our Lord" (MR 201,2,2). "You have undertaken to watch over their conduct and to instruct them [...] and to work for the salvation of their souls" (MR 201,3,2). De La Salle speaks also of "the zeal that you have for the salvation of the souls of those you have to instruct" (MR 201,3,2) and of "the burning zeal for the salvation of those you are called upon to instruct" (MR 205,2,2). This salvation is described as "the life of grace in this world, and eternal life in the next" (MR 201,3,2).

This work is not useless: on the contrary, it serves to save "those they were called upon to instruct" (MR 207,2,1). The children you instruct will be "won over to God"; in fact, you will procure glory both for them and for yourselves (MR 208,1,2). These teachers will be "the means of salvation" for the children they instruct (MR 208,2,1), because instructing young people with zeal and application obtains "salvation for children" (MR 208,3,2). Those who taught them the way to heaven will be blessed (MR 208,3,2).

Instructing obtains salvation for children and in this way **the glory of God** is manifested. God reveals him-

self in this concrete salvific process. When he reveals himself in this way, he is seen in all his glory, because he reveals himself as God, as God doing God's work, the salvation of the poor.

Salvation and glory are the activities proper to the God of all goodness mentioned in *the Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. The humble action of instructing leads directly to this divine glory experienced by children and their teachers, glory in the presence of all the elect in heaven (MR 208).

"Instructing them solely for the love and glory of God" (MR 201,2,1). Procuring glory for God by giving children "the spirit of wisdom, the insight to know him clearly and light for the eyes of their hearts" (MR 206,1,1). In this way, "on the day of judgment they will be your glory, if you have taught them well" (MR 208,1,2).

Instructing children means "laying the foundation of the Church" (MR 199,1,2), working on "the building of the Church" (MR 200,1,1), "making them a true part of the structure of this building" (MR 201,2,2), because they are "a part of the building that is the Church" (MR 205,3,2).

The Church chooses some of its members for this ministry (MR 199,1,2, MR 199,2,2). It is for the Church that "you work" (MR 201,2,2). Catechising and instructing the poor (MR 200,1,2) is of great use to the Church, and is "a way of showing tangible proof that you love those whom God has entrusted to you just as Jesus Christ has loved his Church" (MR 201,2,2).

5. APPENDICES

5.1. Use of the words "instruction" and "to instruct" in 17th century French

5.1.1. INSTRUCTION

- Richelet's Dictionary (Amsterdam, 1709).

Teachings, instructive memoirs. The instruction is very good. He gave his instructions regarding the embassies.

- The *Dictionnaire Universel* (Trévoux, 1721).

Precept, teaching (academic studies or morality).

- They write catechisms for the instruction of young people in Christianity.

- You can find good instruction in the morals of fables, in satires and plays.

- The example of a good life is an instruction for the human race (Bossuet).

It means also the education of young people:

- Princes are given tutors who are responsible for their instruction and education.

- It is used also of information we wish to communicate to someone:

- Prefaces serve as an instruction regarding the good use of a book.

- I have sent you this memoir for your instruction, so that you may know what this business is about.

5.1.2. To INSTRUCT

-*Dictionnaire Universel* (Trévoux, 1721) To teach young people, to bring up

- Colleges are founded to instruct young people in the sciences, seminaries to instruct young clerics.

- The Court, that fine society, is a good school for instructing and teaching how to live as one should.

- I shall instruct him myself to avenge the Trojans (Racine).

It means also to inform someone, let him know something.

- This prince is well-informed about his interests and foreign affairs. By "a badly instructed child" is meant one that is uncouth, unpolished, ill-mannered. A well-instructed one is well-behaved and behaves as he should.

- *Grand Vocabulaire français* (Paris, 1770)

Differences between teaching (*enseigner*), teaching (*apprendre*) and instructing.

Teaching (*enseigner*); means only giving lessons.

Teaching (*apprendre*): giving lessons for profit.

Instructing: explaining things by means of detailed memoirs.

Teaching (*enseigner* and *apprendre*) has more to do with cultivating the mind and giving a fine education. It is used, therefore, when there is question of arts or sciences.

Instructing has more to do with what is useful for a particular situation in life and with success in business. It is appropriate, therefore, when our duties or our interests are involved.

5.2. Instruction(s) and to instruct: titles of manuals or chapter headings in De La Salle's writings

"Instruction" in the singular or plural can be used in a title for a manual, such as, "Instructions and Prayers", or within the manual in a chapter heading, or even in a heading for specific lesson, such as "Preliminary Instructions" (DB). Used in the singular, instruction can mean a sermon or homily: "The sermon is an instruction which the priest..." (CL 22,36 = DC 20,4,1).

The number of times "Instruction(s)" is used in titles of books, or headings in chapters and lessons:

- Conduct of Schools	1
- Duties of a Christian (DA)	3
- Duties of a Christian (DB) (all chapters)	76
- Of External and Public Worship (DC)	3
- Instructions and Prayers	17
- Rules of Propriety	1

The number of times "Instruction" is used in the sense of sermon, homily, lesson:

- Duties of a Christian (DA)	1
- Of External and Public Worship	4
- Instructions and Prayers	2
- Exercises of Piety	6

¹ See also MF 84,1,1; MR 196,2,1 & 2; MR 198,3,1 & 2; MR 202,2,1 & 2.

² See also CL 20,476 = DA 405,2,3; MD 37,2,1 & 2; MD 61,2,1; MF 81,2,2; MF 175,2,2; MF 175,3,2; MR 193,1,1; MR 198,1,2; MR 201,1,2.

³ See also CL 22,39 = DC 20,4,9; MD 60,3,1; MD 61,2,1; MF 79,3,2; MF 109,3,2; MF 145,2,2; MF 175,3,2; MR 200,1,1 & 2.

⁴ See also CL 20,476 = DA 405,2,3; CL 22,36 = DC 20,4,3; MD 3,1,1 & 2; MD 7,1,2; MF 80,2,2; MF 92,3,1; MF 111,3,2; MF 115,3,2; MF 131,1,2; MF 155,1,1; MF 186,2,2; MR 193,1,2; MR 194,2 & 3; MR 197,2; MR 201,1,2; MR 208,1 & 2; RC 30,1.

⁵ See also RC 2,10 & CL 15,75 = R 11,1,6.

⁶ See MR 196,2 & 3; MR 200,1 & 2; MF 79,2,2; MF 86,3,2; MR194.3,1; CL 19, preface = RB 0,0,1-3.

⁷ Regarding the duties of married people towards their children, see CL 20,121 = DA 205,0,6; CL 20,122 = DA 205,0,8; CL 20,125f = DA 206,0,4-6; CL 21,241 = DE 3,23,8-9.

⁸ Conditions for receiving the tonsure (CL 20,374 = DA 309,2,7) reflect the personal experience of De La Salle as a child.

⁹ See also MD 37,2,2; MF 98,3,1; MF 99,1,2; MF 11,3,2; MF 115,1,2; MF 192,1,2; MR 205,3,1 & 2; MR 206,2,1; MR 207,3,1 & 2; MR 208,1,1 & 2.

¹⁰ See CL 19,131 = RB 205,0,349: Of Entertainments. In particular CL 19,142 = RB 205,3,377: Of Gambling, and CL 19,153 = RB 205,5,405: Of Entertainments which are not permitted.

Complementary themes

Apostle
Catechism
Celebrating
Child - pupil - disciple
Christian
Christian teacher

Education
God's role
God's work
Goodness
Guardian angels
Hearts (to touch)

Imitation of Christ
Mission
Poor
Sacraments
Salvation
School
Teacher-pupil relation

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(See pp. 599-600, a note on the word "instruire" in the meditations of De La Salle).
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82. MASS

Summary

1. The Eucharistic liturgy in the 17th century

1.1. The meaning of the word Mass 1.2. The rite prescribed by St Pius V 1.3. De La Salle celebrated frequently and with fervour.

2. Eucharistic theology in the 17th century

Strong distinction between Mass as a sacrifice and Mass as a sacrament. Numerous speculations regarding the sacrificial aspect of the Mass.

3. The theological position of De La Salle

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4. De La Salle's instructions for assisting at Mass

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5. The Mass in De La Salle's writings for his Brothers

The Founder invites his disciples to attend Mass with fervour and to communicate frequently.

6. Conclusion

Despite some outmoded aspects, De La Salle's writings on the Eucharist are interesting for what they have to say about the interior dispositions for assisting at Mass.

1. THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY IN THE 17th CENTURY

1.1 The meaning of the word Mass

"The Mass" is the term used most commonly in the Latin Church, at least up until recently, to refer to the celebration of the Eucharist. Especially after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, it has become standard for Roman Catholics to use the fuller expression, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Eastern churches have preferred the term "Liturgy" for the Eucharistic rite, a usage that is gaining currency in the Latin Church since Vatican Council II.

The word "Mass" is derived from the rite of dismissal, *missa* in Latin. Recent commentators have not failed to point out how strange it seems to designate the entire rite in terms of the dismissal. That is why contemporary usage prefers the term "Liturgy" for the celebration.

1.2. The rite prescribed by St Pius V

After the Council of Trent, Mass in the Latin rite was celebrated generally throughout the Western Church according to the ritual in the *Missale Romanum* promulgated in 1570 by Pope Pius V. Thus the Mass was everywhere celebrated in Latin, with the priest facing the altar, even for the readings, with his back to the congregation. All the responses to the priest were made in Latin by the acolyte or altar boy. The ritual provided for sung solemn high Masses, with the priest assisted by a deacon and subdeacon (who often were themselves priests), sung high Masses, and low Masses. On Sundays and Feasts the pastor was obliged to celebrate the solemn parish Mass for the intention of his people.

Ever since Lateran Council IV in 1215 Catholics have been obliged under pain of sin to assist at Mass on Sundays and Feasts of Obligation. The evidence seems to indicate that in seventeenth-century France large numbers attended the parish Mass on Sundays and Feasts. Even on weekdays, the low Masses were well attended and it was part of the routine in parish schools to have all the children attend daily Mass. In the parish of St Sulpice, for example, the first Mass would begin as early as 4:00 a.m. to allow workers to attend and to allow for multiple Masses to fulfill the provisions of contracts and wills. Since everything, except the sermon, was in Latin, and since vernacular translations of the Mass texts were forbidden, the people in the congregation were more or less left to their own private prayers and devotions.

In the foreword to his book entitled *Instructions and prayers for Holy Mass*, De La Salle himself notes that although the Mass is "the principal and most excellent" of all our daily actions, yet "very few people assist at it with devotion and very few are instructed in the best manner to do so" (CL 17,3 = I 1,1,1.). In such circumstances, it was easy for children especially to become restless and distracted, even disorderly, as can be seen in the repeated directives given by John Baptist de La Salle to the Brothers to supervise carefully their pupils at Mass.

1.3. De La Salle celebrated frequently and with fervour

De La Salle was ordained a priest on Holy Saturday, April 9, 1678, in the chapel of the Archbishop of Reims. He celebrated his first Mass the following day, Easter Sunday, in the Lady Chapel of Rheims Cathedral. His biographer, Canon Blain, uses this occasion to devote three whole pages to the fervor that De La Salle brought to the celebration of the Eucharist. "The air of sanctity which he wore on the occasion of his first Mass was not something that he soon lost. He

never lost it. Its root was within him in the fund of grace and virtues which he had acquired, while the presence of the Holy Spirit was its source. This attitude only grew stronger in him with every Mass he celebrated" (CL 7, 131f).

The Founder regularly celebrated Mass for the Brothers, with or without their pupils, as the occasion demanded. Since the communities did not usually have their own private chapels, but only an oratory for community prayer, the Founder would celebrate Mass in the nearest parish church.

Blain recounts how on one occasion De La Salle and Father Bauyn, his spiritual director and the superior of the Sulpician minor seminary, celebrated Mass one after the other on the patronal feast of the church of Saint Lambert at Vaugirard. The biographer comments: "Never was there a devotional spectacle more striking and more edifying than to see at the altar these two holy priests of the New Law renewing in an unbloody manner the sacrifice of the cross. [...] One might have supposed that they saw Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with their own eyes. Both held themselves before him in total annihilation" (CL 7,330).

Another interesting bit of evidence relates to the sojourn of the Founder in Grenoble in the autumn of 1713 as described in Brother Leo Burkhard's book on Parmenie. The source is a deposition made to the authorities in Rome for the beatification process by a certain Brother Patrice. Speaking of what he had learned in Grenoble from old men in the city who had been pupils of De La Salle, Brother Patrice testified: "He himself led his pupils to the parish church where he celebrated Mass for them. The pupils, and especially anyone who served his Mass, were all struck with the piety and devotion of this priest. Whenever he was spotted on his way to the church with his young scholars, people could be heard to say: 'Let us go to Mass. See, there, the holy priest on his way to celebrate it'".

2. EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY IN THE 17th CENTURY

The traditional context for the development of a theology of the Mass is the theology of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Especially after the controversies with the Protestants in the sixteenth century, Catholic theology tended to isolate three mysteries contained in

this sacrament: the sacrament itself and its efficacy, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the consecrated elements, and the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The last of these three mysteries would be the usual context for developing a theological understanding of the Mass.

Since the Eucharist has such a strong scriptural base, the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century did not deny that the Eucharist was a true sacrament instituted by Christ. Although they all rejected the idea of transubstantiation, they were divided among themselves on the reality and the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. But with regard to the Mass, or the "Lord's Supper", as they preferred to call the rite, they were vehement in their denial that the Mass is a sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the one and only once-for-all sacrifice of the New Law.

The response of the Council of Trent was to insist on four points: 1. The Mass is a "true and proper sacrifice". 2. In the Mass the "bloody sacrifice of the Cross is represented and its efficacy applied". 3. In the Mass there is "an unbloody immolation" which is seen under the "visible signs", the "species of bread and wine". 4. The sacrificial oblation in the Mass is different from the oblation on the cross "only in the manner of offering".

The Catholic theologians of the seventeenth and subsequent centuries have consistently used the four pivots of the Tridentine doctrine as the framework for

elaborating a theology of the Mass as a sacrifice. Within this framework, however, extensive theological discussion arose on several questions that Trent left unanswered. The theological speculation of the time presumed that, in order to explain how the Mass is a sacrifice, it had to be shown that in the Mass there occurred an offering and an immolation of the victim being sacrificed to God. Some authors sought some kind of real immolation or destruction of the victim in the breaking of the host and the eating of the species. Other authors speculated that in the Mass there is a true immolation but a virtual one, that is the representation of the sacrifice of the cross by the separate consecration of the species.

The position favored by the French Oratorian school of the seventeenth century, and developed extensively by Bossuet was that the Mass is a sacrifice with a true but virtual immolation. In this view, the Mass represents the sacrifice of Christ on the cross in the mystical separation of the body and blood of Christ symbolized by the double consecration of the bread and wine. In the Mass, Christians can unite with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in this state of annihilation.

3. THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF DE LA SALLE

3.1. In his writings

De La Salle treats of the Mass from a doctrinal and theological point of view in two of his major works: *The Duties of a Christian*, and his *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass, confession and communion*.

The *Instructions for Holy Mass* has two main sections. The first is devoted to an explanation of the meaning of the Mass and its ceremonies; the second has two sets of prayers that might be used during Mass in order to assist at it with attention and devotion in union with the actions and prayers of the priest at the altar.

The first part of the first volume (DA) of the *Duties of a Christian* treats of our duties to God under the heading of faith (the Creed) and charity (the commandments). The second part indicates the means of nourishing faith and charity by the sacraments and prayer. The doctrinal material from the first part is then presented in catechetical form of question and answer in the second book of the *Duties of a Christian* (DB). The third book of the *Duties* (DC) puts in

catechetical form the practical material relating to the exterior worship of the Church, especially the parish Mass.

3.2 Sacrifice and Sacrament

De La Salle treats of the Mass under the heading "of the Eucharist as a sacrifice" (CL 20,261 = DA 305f), distinguishing it from "the Eucharist as sacrament" (CL 20,241 = DA 304f). In fact, he puts great emphasis on the distinction between the two. Thus the Eucharist is a sacrament "because God gives to the faithful the body and blood of Christ" under sensible signs for their sanctification; it is a sacrifice "when the body and blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine are offered to God the Father in the Mass through the ministry of priests in memory of the passion and death of the same Jesus Christ" (CL 20,261 = DA 305,1,1).

For De La Salle, "the Eucharist is a sacrifice only during the time the body and blood of Christ are actually offered to God, that is, in the consecration [...] when the priest pronounces the words by which the

bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ" (CL 20,261 = DA 305,1,2).

After the consecration of the Mass, the Eucharist is a sacrament and no longer a sacrifice. In explaining the difference further, De La Salle explains that the Eucharist as sacrament is intended to sanctify persons and profits only the faithful who receive it worthily, whereas the Eucharist as a sacrifice is intended to honor God as the Creator and profits everyone, even sinners and unbelievers (CL 20,262 = DA 205,1,3).

De La Salle's formal treatment of the Eucharist as a sacrament follows the theology traditional since Thomas Aquinas and the doctrinal decrees of the Council of Trent. Thus, the Eucharist is the greatest of the seven sacraments (CL 20,242 & 401 = DA 304,1,1 & 310,5,11). It was instituted at the Last Supper by Christ (CL 20,248 = DA 304,2,1; CL 17,237 = 15,2,1), who is living and present in the sacrament (CL 21,209 = DB 3,16,5). The bread and wine constitute the matter of the sacrament, while the words of institution are the form (CL 21,150 = DB 3,2,2f). The Eucharist should be received with the proper dispositions (CL 21,215 = DB 3,18,3) so that it can produce its proper effects in terms of grace (CL 20,258 = DA 304,4,7f). The Eucharist unites us to Jesus Christ in an intimate way and is the nourishment for the soul (CL 17,273 = I 6,26).

3.3 A disputed question

Following the usage of the post-Tridentine theologians, De La Salle applies to the Mass the traditional definition of sacrifice: an exterior offering to God alone whereby "something agreeable to him is destroyed in his honor by a person with the right and the commission to do so in order to witness to God's sovereign dominion over all his creatures" (CL 20,262f = DA 305,1,4).

The crucial question, much disputed among theologians, is where in the Mass the immolation or destruction of the victim is to be found. De La Salle maintains that the destruction in the Mass consists in "the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, thereby destroying the substance of the bread and wine through the words of institution" (CL 21,263f = DA 205,1,6).

The objection that could be made to this and similar theories is that the destruction concerns the bread and wine, and not the true victim who is Jesus Christ.

Aware of this De La Salle goes on to say: "The victim of the sacrifice in the Holy Mass is not the bread and wine, but the body and blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. It is in the consecration that this victim is offered to God, and consecrated and destroyed as well in God's honor. Since Jesus Christ can no longer actually die, because he already died on the cross, he dies to the extent possible in the Holy Mass in a manner which is called mystical, in so far as his body and blood are separated in this sacrifice. In virtue of the words of consecration only the body is in the host and the blood in the chalice, even though in reality the blood is in the host with the body and the body is in the chalice with the blood" (CL 20,264 = DA 305,1,7).

Elsewhere, De La Salle speaks of the "abnegation" and the "humiliation" of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist (CL 17,263 & 268 = 16,1 & 6,21). It seems that here, in effect, De La Salle is espousing two opposite theories: a theory of real immolation centered on the destruction of the substance of the bread and wine, as well as a sort of "mystical death" of Jesus annihilating himself by being present in the Eucharist, and a theory of virtual immolation centered on the sacramental separation of the body and blood in the double consecration.

3.4. The Eucharist as a source of grace

Following the Tridentine doctrine that the Mass is efficacious for the living and the dead, De La Salle provides a long list of the graces and benefits that come from offering the sacrifice of the Mass.

In the Mass, we give the greatest honor to God, offering the sacrifice of Christ as the best possible thanksgiving to God. This in turn brings new benefits from God; souls are thereby freed from Purgatory; the Mass remits the temporal punishment due to mortal and venial sin; we obtain the remission of sin and the grace of conversion; we obtain the graces needed to quit bad habits and to avoid sin and its occasions; we obtain the gift of union and reconciliation with our neighbor; the Mass is a powerful help to fulfill our duties in a Christian manner; we can recover bodily health and other temporal benefits. Finally, he says, it is through the Mass that we can more easily obtain from God what we ask, "more by one Mass well attended than by all our other holiest actions put together" (CL 17,7f = I 1, 2,5f).

4. DE LA SALLE'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSISTING AT MASS

4.1. Physical presence is not enough

In his book of *Instructions on the Mass*, De La Salle seems to be concerned as much with an adult congregation as with children. Thus, after insisting on the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and feasts, he urges that workers should also make it their first care to attend daily Mass (CL 17,10 = I 1,3,3). He suggests that sick persons on feasts, and those unable to attend Mass on weekdays should unite themselves in spirit with the priest and the assembly, offer themselves in sacrifice, and act as if they were present and as if they really preferred to be at Mass (CL 17,10 = I 1,3,4).

De La Salle is equally concerned that mere physical presence at Mass does not suffice to fulfil one's obligation, that the Church intends not only that we be present but that we be attentive to God and our duties to God (CL 17,11 = I 1,4,1). He then distinguishes three kinds of dispositions that would satisfy the obligation to hear Mass, and the corresponding obstacles or sins. First, to fulfil the minimal requirements of this commandment of the Church, one must be present for the entire Mass, fully attentive in a religious spirit. The two related sins would be not to be present, or being present but inattentive and without a prayerful spirit. The second disposition, i.e., the state of grace and a hatred of sin, is needed if one is to reap the benefits from the Mass. Mortal sin, or the will to sin and frequent its occasions would be the corresponding obstacles. The third disposition, the best possible, is to have not the least affection for sin and to unite with the priest in accord with the intention of the Church in the Mass (CL 17,12 = I 1,4,2f).

4.2 The meaning of rituals and symbols

To help his readers understand the ceremonies of the Mass and to join with the priest in offering Christ's sacrifice of himself to the Father, De La Salle explains the symbols and summarizes the prayers used at Mass. He suggests, for example, that the candles are lighted to symbolize the charity with which Christ is immolated for us and with which we ought to assist at the Mass (CL 17,16 = I 1,6,4). The priest appears vested for Mass to represent Christ carrying the cross and about to offer himself for us by his death (CL 17,16 =

I 1,6,5). During the offertory rite, when the bread and wine become separated from profane use, the bread "represents all Christians [...] incorporated into the body of Jesus Christ by this sacrifice" (CL 17,27 = I 1,6,25). The change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ takes place with the words of consecration (CL 17,33 = I 1,6,37), while the prayer immediately following reminds us of the three mysteries of the passion, the resurrection, and the ascension as the sources of our salvation (CL 17,34 = I 1,6,39).

4.3 With the help of a book

Following the explanation of the various ceremonies, De La Salle supplies his readers with prayers to be said during Mass : the French texts of the psalms and the hymns and Creed that would often be sung in Latin, and very personalized paraphrases of the prayers prescribed for the priest throughout the Mass (CL 17,43f = I 1,7,160).

For example, there is this act of adoration to be made at the elevation of the host;

"My savior Jesus, who obey the
words of the priest
so promptly and so exactly that you
change the bread and wine
into your body and blood the minute
the priest pronounces these words, I
adore you really present in this
sacred host,
I adore your submission and your
total abnegation in this sacrifice,
and I ask you to give me some share
in the holy dispositions that you here
make manifest"

(CL 17,62 = I 1,7,45).

Since the assigned scriptural readings for each day were read by the priest in Latin and facing the altar, and since translations of the readings for each day were not readily available, De La Salle supplies the French text of Romans 12 for meditation during the reading of the Epistle, and the text of the Sermon on the Mount in Chapter 6 of Luke for meditation during the Gospel (CL 17,49f = I 1,7,17f).

In the same manual *Instructions and prayers*, De La Salle then offers a second set of "Other prayers during the Holy Mass that correspond to all the actions and prayers of the priest" (CL 17,71f = I 1,8).

These are shorter and much simpler than the others, more suitable perhaps to young people, but still characterized by a highly personal and intimate address, designed to unite the reader to the person of Jesus Christ in union with the actions of the priest at the altar.

4.4 Daily Mass in schools

Chapter VIII of the *Conduct of Christian Schools* is devoted to daily Mass for the pupils that formed part of the regular school schedule. The schedule should be so arranged that the pupils could hear Mass every day in the nearest church and at the most convenient hour. The best time is said to be 10:30 a.m. After Mass, the people could go directly home for their midday meal. If Mass could not be scheduled for 10:30 a.m., it is recommended that the Mass be at 9:00 a.m. or thereabouts (CL 24,84 = CE 8).

On Sundays and feasts, the Brothers should bring their pupils to the parish Mass and later to Vespers in the nearest church and at the most convenient time (CL 24,95 = CE 8,7,1). The same supervision should be exercised by teachers and the same incentives to devotion and attention provided as at the daily Mass (CL 24,96 = CE 8,7,10).

On the last day of the school year, the pupils are to be reminded to be faithful to their religious practices during the time of vacation. Specifically they should be encouraged to attend Mass daily and to use the book of Mass prayers, to attend the parish Mass on Sundays and feasts, to go to confession and communion at least once during the vacation period, and to make a 15 minute visit to adore the Blessed Sacrament every day (CL 24,202 = CE 17,3,5f). A Mass of the Holy Spirit for the intention of the students is to be celebrated on the first day of school after the vacation (CL 24,203 = CE 17,3,15).

Strict rules are laid down for the conduct of the pupils on the way to Mass (by twos and in silence), during Mass (attentive and prayerful), and after Mass (orderly dismissal). Before leaving for Mass, the Brother should remind the pupils how they should behave and to provide them with motivation to do so (CL 24,86 = CE 8,1,11). During Mass, rosary beads are distributed for the pupils who have not yet learned to read, and collected afterwards. Those who can read are instructed to use the book of prayers for Mass,

probably *Instructions and Prayers* (CL 24,89 = CE 8,3,7). At the consecration the rosary beads and the books are to be set aside in order to bow and adore Christ present in the host and chalice (CL 24,90 = CE 8,3,9).

The Brothers are reminded that their principal role on the way to the church, during the Mass, and after is to supervise their pupils. They do not attend Mass for themselves but only to watch over their charges. That is why they will not use books and pay attention to the sacrifice only in a general way (CL 24,92 = CE 8,4,3f). The students should be so placed that they are far enough apart and in full view of the teacher (CL 24,88 = CE 8,2,10). In particular, the Brother should make sure that the pupils do not speak together, exchange their books, assume a slouchy posture, or bring anything into the church that would prove a source of distraction. The best means to prevent these faults is to oblige each pupil to hold his prayer book in front of him with both hands and to read it continually during the Mass (CL 24,91 = CE 8,3,7).

In the section of the *Conduct* on correction, certain penalties are indicated for violations of discipline in connection with Mass. Corporal punishment with canes is indicated for serious misbehaviour. It is interesting to note that expulsion is the penalty for habitual absence from Sunday Mass "through the fault of parents and make it a habit" (CL 24,148 = CE 15,1,22).

4.5 Frequent communion

In his pastoral role as a priest, De La Salle was in favour of frequent communion, a fact that is clearly revealed by his writings. In the *Duties*, one of the chapters is entitled: "Of the Obligation Christians have of receiving the Eucharist and how often they should do so".

After reminding his readers of the obligation of receiving communion at least once a year, he goes on to quote St Ambrose: "Receive it every day so as to benefit from it every day", and then an anonymous writer: "I do not approve of receiving communion every day, but I do not disapprove either. I advise [...] people to receive communion every Sunday". He ends by saying: "To decide on the frequency of receiving communion, one should follow the advice of a wise confessor" (CL 20,251f = DA 304,3).

In *Instructions and Prayers*, De La Salle speaks of the obligation of receiving the Eucharist. He refers here to the canonical obligation of doing so once a year, which derives from "the intention Jesus Christ had" in instituting this sacrament, wanting it "to serve as nourishment for our souls". That is the reason why "the Church has always considered the reception of the body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as a religious exercise and an obligatory act" (CL 17,237f = I 5,2).

De La Salle urges his readers to overcome their fear of sacrilegious communion, a common attitude

at the time. He suggests a number of "acts" to them, that is, short prayers to recite before and after communion so as to be filled with suitable thoughts and feelings. These texts are permeated with reverential fear, but especially with trust in God. They reveal the writer's familiarity with Jesus Christ with whom he speaks. By their tender tone reminiscent of the writings of St Francis de Sales, they could (and still can) lead communicants to develop a correct understanding of the Eucharist and a more interior life of faith, the source of spiritual progress.

5. THE MASS IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS FOR HIS BROTHERS

In the *Rules* of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, two days each week were "communion days". These were normally Thursday and Sunday, days when the Brothers could attend Mass without having to supervise the pupils at the same time (CL 20,23f = RC 4,5). In the Church of the time, lay people, even if consecrated to God by vows, did not use to go to communion so frequently.

The Founder rarely refers to the Mass in the *Meditations* written for the Brothers, except in reference to the real presence or the reception of the sacrament. Speaking of St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, he recalls that "her confessor allowed her to communicate from the age of 10 onwards", and that later, when she became a religious, she chose the Carmelite Order because the Sisters communicated often (MF 130,2). In his meditation on St. Louis of Poissy, De La Salle praises the saint's faith in the real presence of Christ in the host at Mass (MF 160,1).

The meditation for November 2 reminds the Brothers that the Mass is an effective means to assist the souls in purgatory and obtain their deliverance (MF 185,2,1).

As a way of sharing his own devotion to the Eucharist with the Brothers, De La Salle wrote eight meditations for the feast of Corpus Christi and its Octave. One of the meditations concentrates on the duty of adoring Christ present in the Eucharist. Two others warn against more or less "useless communions" and "bad communions". The five others encourage the

Brothers to communicate frequently. After recalling that the first Christians communicated every day, he wrote: "You cannot find a more prompt or effective remedy for your temptations and failures than the reception of the body of Jesus Christ. Receive him often" (MD 54,2,2).

De La Salle's most extensive writing on the Mass directed to the Brothers can be found in the *Collection*. The manner in which the Brothers assists at Mass is a matter for the reddition of conscience to the Director (CL 15,36 = R 8,2,15). One example of performing an action through custom rather than by the spirit of faith would be to assist at Mass in a routine manner through force of habit (CL 15,92 = R 11,2,36). The *Collection* has two very lengthy sections on how the Brothers should unite themselves interiorly with Christ and the priest in order to fulfill the ends of the Mass, namely sacrifice, thanksgiving, propitiation, and impetration. The same basic ideas are repeated in the "reflections the Brothers have to make from time to time, and especially during the retreat" (CL 15,219f = R16,8).

De La Salle wanted everyone, and especially the Brothers, to assist at Mass with the best possible interior dispositions and to use the *Instructions and Prayers* that he had written for this purpose. Thus, in the earliest letter to a Brother that has survived, he writes: "You know that Holy Mass is the most important exercise of religion. That is why you should bring to it all possible attention" (LC 102,10).

6. CONCLUSION

It is not surprising that many aspects of De La Salle's understanding of the Mass have become outdated as a result of the liturgical movement in this century, new approaches to sacramental and biblical theology, culminating in the revision of both doctrine and ritual brought about by the Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican Council II. In particular, the emphasis today is on the Eucharistic action in its entirety as a sacrificial memorial meal, rather than an arbitrarily separated sacrifice and sacrament; there is less concern to fit the action to a prior definition of sacrifice; there is sensitivity to the presence of Christ in the assembled congregation and in the proclamation of the word as well as in the Eucharistic elements. The Eucharist is no longer seen as an occasion for private devotional practices, but rather an action of the assembled Christian community, with active participation and understanding made possible by having the priest celebrate the Mass in the vernacular facing the people.

There is, however, an enduring element in De La Salle's writing on the Mass and the Eucharist. The fundamental teaching of De La Salle on the nature of and efficacy of the Mass and the importance of assisting at it with understanding and devotion remains permanently valid. It might even be said that he shows a

sensitivity, rare for his time, to the need for instruction and prayer books to induce lay people to participate in the sacraments in a personal way, without fearing to receive communion, an attitude which was common in the Church of the day, especially in France.

De La Salle often refers to the ancient origins of many of the details of the rite to help make them comprehensible to his readers. The prayers that he suggests to accompany the various actions and prayers of the priest are very close in spirit and sometimes to the letter of the official Mass texts, which was not always the case in the prayer books of the time.

Lasallians today, therefore, could profitably use the *Instructions and Prayers* as spiritual reading before Mass to become attuned to something of the Founder's reverential awe before the mystery and his tender familiarity with Jesus Christ. De La Salle's continued insistence that the Eucharist is the most excellent of the sacraments and that the Mass is the most important act of religion is not far removed from the statement in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of Vatican II that "the liturgy is the summit toward which all the activity of the Church is directed and the source from which all her power flows" (*Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10).

Complementary themes

Correction

Mystery

Prayer

Sacrament

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83. MINISTRY, MINISTER

Summary

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"De La Salle likes the word minister, used by him about 100 times (as well as ministry, with more or less equal frequency). The Meditations for the Time of Retreat are particularly rich in this regard: one or other term occurs 38 times in 16 meditations" (Raymond Brisebois).¹

1. USE AND MEANING OF THESE TERMS IN THE TIME OF DE LA SALLE

1.1. Etymology and use

The terms "minister" and "ministry" were known in the 17th century, and were used equally in ecclesiastical, administrative and governmental circles, and in the Catholic and Reformed Churches.

The two terms are derived from classical Latin: *minister* (servant), *ministerium* (service, office), *ministerial* (in charge of a service). These are learned formations, unlike the more currently used *metier* (profession, trade) also derived from *ministerium*.

Up to the 16th century, minister was used mostly with the meaning of servant of God, of worship. This explains the use of the word to describe those who preside over Protestant services.

In the 17th century, "ministry" and "minister" took on in addition a new meaning. The minister is one who is in charge of a function, an office. He is the person who is asked to perform certain tasks in the name of some high authority, such as God or the King. This can be on the religious level (minister of the Lord, of Jesus Christ, of the Gospel, of Religion, of the Word of God, of the altar), or in a diplomatic or governmental context (the person delegated to sign in the name of the Prince, or who has a high post in administration).

The two terms gradually took on extra meanings, such as

- **ministry**: an activity which constitutes a craft, profession, service, responsibility, office, function, mission and sometimes government;
- **minister**: an executive, receiving his orders from the source itself of authority, a high functionary delegated to sign documents.

1.2. In ecclesiastical publications

When ecclesiastical functions are concerned, "ministry" almost always refers to the functions of the bishop or of the priest. One of the quotations from St Paul most often used by De La Salle in his meditations: "The ministers of Jesus Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Co 4,1-2), is explained as follows in the *New Testament* published in Brussels in 1700: "Bishops and other pastors are only the depositaries of hidden divine truth and dispensers of the sacraments".

It would be interesting for us to know whether among the contemporaries of De La Salle there was anyone who used the word ministry when referring to schoolmasters and mistresses.

St Joseph Calasanzius (1556-1648), Founder of the Clerks Regular of the Pious Schools, in Italy, stressed the importance of the "ministry of the school", but had to defend his point of view because of the interpretation the Council of Trent had given this term. A short while after his death, in 1687, it was decreed

that only the priests and clerics of this Institute, and no longer the Brothers, could teach in schools.²

Anne de Xainctonge (1567-1621), who established the Company of St Ursula, in the Franche Comté, for the Christian education of girls, considered her activities as foundress as "an apostolic ministry".³

The anonymous author of *Règlements et méthode pour les écoles* (Paris, 1710), writes: "The man must teach through his ministry of the word only what Jesus Christ has taught". He adds later that "a part of the apostolic ministry" is entrusted to teachers.⁴ The context implies that these teachers could be lay persons.

In the writings of François Giry³ (1687), this is affirmed more explicitly. Women teachers fulfil "in part the office of parish priests, bishops and the highest prelates of the Church", working in "the great ministry of the salvation of souls" (Med 2,1). He writes also: "Your ministry" (Med 3,1) and "Consider that a schoolmistress even exercises the office of Jesus Christ" (Med 2,3). This is because the mistress is "like the vicar or representative" of the pastor; "she is very much like the deaconesses of the first centuries of the Church".⁶

And so, when De La Salle speaks to the Brothers about the ministry they exercise, he does so as someone belonging to a minority trend. While he is not the first to speak in this way, it can be said that he is the one who developed the theme of the ministry of Christian teachers most fully, in particular on the basis of St Paul's epistles. This did not prevent him, however, from using "minister" and "ministry" with the meaning current at the time.

De La Salle never defines "ministry". He knows that the King has a "Minister of State" (CL 19,245 = RB 210,1,625). Elsewhere, speaking of Christ, he mentions "the ministry with which he is entrusted" (MF 93,3) and the "functions of his ministry as lawgiver and redeemer of mankind" (MD 40,1). Several times he uses the word minister in the context of sacraments (to indicate who is the minister of a particular sacrament), as well as in the context of other ecclesiastical functions which often constitute ordained ministries.

To grasp his thinking about ordained ministries, it is best to read his catechisms.

2. THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH IN THE "DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN"

2.1. Power of orders and power of jurisdiction

In the *Duties of a Christian*, De La Salle says that the organisation of the Church is derived from the mission of Christ: "Before returning to heaven, Jesus Christ left to his Church in the person of his Apostles two things which were his: power and doctrine" (CL 20,69 = DA 105,3,1).

"The power of orders belongs to priests and ministers of the Church by virtue of their ordination" (*id.* 2). "The power of jurisdiction is what the Pope and the bishops receive and exercise as successors of the Apostles". It "resides in the principal ministers of Jesus Christ and pastors of the Church" (CL 20,70 = DA 105,3,3f).

De La Salle returns to these parallel powers at the end of his explanation: "The invisible guidance of Jesus Christ is not enough for the government of the Church. As it is an external and visible body, a visible head was needed to govern it". Jesus Christ "wished even that there should be other priests and other ministers to serve in the Church, who would work to instruct the faithful, to administer the sacraments to them and serve at the holy altars" (CL 20,74 = DA 105,4,3f).

In DA, "minister" and "doctrine" are rarely associated. "Lectors are ministers of the Church whose function is to read the Holy Scriptures during divine office and to teach the basic principles of Christian doctrine to the children and faithful who are ignorant of them" (CL 20,81 = DA 105,6,8). But DA notes that "the lower ministers of the Church [...] normally do not exercise anymore any other functions in the Church except those concerned with the sacrifice of Holy Mass" (CL 20,82 = DA 105,6,9).

2.2. Ordained ministries

"Orders give power to the ministers of the Church to guide and govern it" (CL 20,203 = DA 301,1,8). "The character of orders is the mark that one is a minister of Jesus Christ and an officer of the Church" (CL 20,209 = DA 301,2,11).

De La Salle lays great stress on the sacramental "power" conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders. "It is priests alone who, as ministers of Jesus Christ, have the power to consecrate the body and blood of

Jesus Christ in the Eucharist" (CL 20,250 = DA 304,2,5). "By the power of the Holy Spirit whom they received at ordination" bishops and priests can "forgive sins by virtue of being ministers of Jesus Christ" (CL 20,315 = DA 307,5,1).

"There was a need to have in the Church officers and ministers of Jesus Christ who would offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist to God, and who would administer the sacraments to the faithful and instruct them in their religion and in all their duties. This is what Jesus Christ, the sovereign lawgiver of the law of grace, founder and head of the Church, provided by instituting the sacrament of Holy Orders, in which the power to exercise the functions and the ministries of the Church is given to those who receive it" (CL 20,365 = DA 390,1,1).

Here again, the ordained ministries are associated with the sacraments and the instruction of the faithful. Nothing is said of ministers concerned with charitable and social work, as might be undertaken by "deacons", except with reference to "the early Church where deacons were also entrusted with the goods of the Church and distributed alms according to the orders of their bishop" (CL 20,80 = DA 105,6,3).

On the other hand, there are qualifying phrases such as "ministers of Jesus Christ" and "in their capacity as ministers of Jesus Christ", which do not mean that only those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders are ministers of Jesus Christ, but that the priest acts by virtue of an explicit mandate from the Church linked to his sacramental ordination. He acts *in persona Christi*. That is why De La Salle writes that "lay people should have great veneration and profound respect for priests and other ecclesiastics because they are pastors of the Church, ministers of God and dispensers of his mysteries" (CL 20,373 = DA 309,2,4 quoting 1 Co 4,1-2).

We should note that in De La Salle's catechisms "ministry" always applies to Jesus Christ or to ordained ministries, except in three passages which speak of the ministry of an angel (CL 22,272 = DC 44,18,6), the ministry of Moses (CL 20,104 = DA 202,0,6) and faults committed by the ministry of hands (CL 20,263 = DA 308,2,11). In this last case, "by the ministry" means simply "by the use of".

When De La Salle speaks of the ministry of the Brothers, he sometimes indicates that this involves participation in the ministry of bishops and priests, but there is no mention of "power" or "jurisdiction". The Brothers' ministry is not in any way an ordained

ministry. The Apostles joined prayer and counsel when they chose Mathias in place of Judas "to share in the holy functions⁷ of the apostolate. It is thus that God wishes you to act in all that pertains to your conduct and your ministry" (MF 107,2).

3. THE MINISTRY OF SUPERIORS IN THE "MEDITATIONS FOR SUNDAYS AND FEASTS"

A small group of meditations (MD 21,72,73,75 & MF 91) speak of the "ministry of superiors". What is strange is that the expression never refers directly to the "Brother Director" who, in any case, is hardly mentioned in the meditations (MD 19 & 71, MF 99). But in two instances (MD 19,1 & MF 99,3), "director" and "superior" are synonymous, and in one (MD 72,3), a distinction is made between "superior" and "confessor". It is probable, therefore, that "superior" should be understood in a broad sense and that it applies to the Brother Director of a house, despite the fact this is forbidden by the *Rule of the Brother Director* (CL 25,154 = FD 1,1).

De La Salle bases the need to have superiors on the same reasons that lead the Church to have pastors (cf. CL 20,74 = DA 105,4,3 quoted in § 2.1). Because man is at the same time both spiritual and material, God's guidance, which is totally interior, cannot be enough for the Brothers: it must be complemented by the visible guidance of their superiors who guide them exteriorly. The meditation for December 30th asks the Brothers: "How have you acted towards

your Superiors during the past year? Have you looked upon them as being the ministers of God given you by the Almighty himself, and taking his place, since it is only in virtue of the authority that he has given them and because they participate in God's power, that they have the right to guide you and command you?" (MF 91,1; cf. Rm 13,1f).

The Brothers must be dependent on their superiors as they are on God, and obey them in all things as they obey God, because all that they say, they do so in his name, or rather, it is God who says it to them. "Whoever listens to you, listens to me" (Lk 10,6).

The guidance given the Brothers has, therefore, two aspects: spiritual direction and a unifying ministry (MD 72,2). Unlike other, more ascetical meditations, what we have here is a mystical approach: taking God's place visibly (MD 73,1), speaking the truth learnt from him (MD 21,1), the superior having to watch over himself to avoid doing anything that might be a bad example or opposed to "the duties of his ministry" (MD 75,1).

4. THE MINISTRY OF SCHOOLMASTERS IN THE "MEDITATIONS FOR SUNDAYS AND FEASTS"

4.1. A word about semantics

Apart from one instance in a letter, "Take great care not to be impatient in the exercise of your ministry" (LI 104,1), it is only in his meditations that De La Salle speaks of the ministry of the Brothers and of other teachers in the Christian Schools.

All in all, the terms "minister" or "ministry" are used 42 times by De La Salle in his meditations when referring to Christian educators (6 MD out of 77, 26 MF out of 110, 10 MR out of 16). This figure becomes 45 if we count the 3 times when the teacher is

described as fulfilling the function or employment of a saint whose ministry is stressed. "Ministry" is always used in the singular in this context, whereas "ministers" are always in the plural and, more often than not, borrowed from a New Testament text. MR 207,1 mentions twice "a more extensive ministry" as a reward. Everywhere else, "ministry" is used with the definite article, the demonstrative article (this ministry), the possessive adjective (your ministry) or an adjective that defines it (such a ministry, MR 193,1,2; 199,1; such a holy ministry, MR 197,3).

Among the terms frequently associated with "ministry" or "minister", we find "state", "function" and especially "employment". In the *Lasallian Vocabulary* as a whole, "state" and "employment" are used more frequently than "ministry". The MR, however, uses "state" only twice. The explanation for this is simple if we remember that this term is used by preference to refer to the Brothers' status. Since, relatively speaking, the MR speak much more about "ministry" than the other meditations, we shall examine them separately, especially as we think that they deal with the topic in a more systematic way.

4.2. The work of schoolmasters

Who are these ministers? Those who teach others (MD 3), children (MD 56), the poor (MF 99,2,2); teachers in their classroom, often addressed as "you" (MD 6,2), persons living in community whose work involves them with children who are sometimes dissolute (MF 180,2), persons withdrawn from the world, called to the holy task of instructing children and teaching them to be pious (MF 99,2); quasi religious whose ministry is to instruct children (MF 114,1). Together, all these terms describe recognisably the Brothers of the Christian Schools working in schools.

The activities of the ministers are directed towards the "souls" in their charge (MF 107,3), the "children they are charged with", their pupils, their disciples, their neighbour (MF 135,1), poor children they have to instruct (MF 166,3). In other words, everything that constitutes "the work of a schoolmaster", whose model is St Cassian who, while teaching his pupils to read and write, formed them in piety and the fear of God: "You are his successors in your employment". You must expect the same reward — persecution — "if you have God in view in your ministry" (MF 155,3).

Other **comparisons** are suggested: the work of St Joseph (MF 110,2), the ministry of John the Baptist (MF 138,3), Paul (MF 99,2), Denis (MF 175,3). "You perform one of the chief functions of the Apostles by instructing the new Christians, that is, your pupils, who are newly filled with the spirit of God in baptism" (MF 102,1, St Ignatius, martyr). "Your reemployment resembles more closely than any other that of the priest" (MF 186,2, St Marcellinus, bishop).

"But you too, like St Denis, are called to announce the truths of the Gospel" (MF 175,3). This biblical

use of the passive signifies **the call of God**: "Your whole study should be to seek God alone. You should apply yourself to the ministry to which he has called you" (MD 58,3)- Jesus Christ having called you to accomplish the mission of Paul and to teach the poor (MF 99,2), "do you not bear in vain the name of Christian and Minister of Jesus Christ in the functions you exercise?" (MF 93,3). MD 56 is addressed directly to the Brothers: "Since by your state you are the ministers of God..." (cf. MR 195,2). This is something which is established: now we have to consider **its scope and its demands**.

MF 140,2, basing itself on the apostolic work of St Paul, summarises in two sentences the doctrine of the **ministry of Christian educators**: "It is God who, in his infinite goodness and power, has called you to impart the knowledge of the Gospel to those who have not yet received it. Look upon yourself, therefore, as the minister of God, and acquit yourself of your duties with the greatest possible zeal as having to render an account to the Lord". In another meditation, the reader is asked to examine his conscience: "You received great graces from God when he called you from the world to a ministry where you are concerned solely with the salvation of souls. Have you consecrated yourself so wholeheartedly to God as to renounce all else and to think only of him and the duties of your state?" (MF 146,3, St Anne; cf. 175,3).

4.3. The spiritual growth of the minister

It is important, therefore, for ministers to recognise "the gifts that God has given them" so that they can proclaim them to their disciples, "using words with which the Spirit of God inspires" his ministers (MF 189,1 quoting 1 Co 2,12f), considering themselves as "the ministers of God and dispensers of his mysteries" (MD 3,2 quoting 1 Co 4,1). Make yourself worthy of so holy a ministry by retreat and application to prayer (MF 102,1 quoting again 1 Co 4,1). Being daily with the poor and charged, like St Martin, with "the duty of clothing them with Jesus Christ", you must "clothe yourself with him" before undertaking so holy a ministry (MF 189,1).

Having to work for the salvation of their neighbour, the Brothers must bring to the exercise of their employment the same dispositions as St Cajetan brought to the exercise of his ministry: "mental prayer, mortification" and also "study, because your ignorance

in such matters would be criminal, since it would cause ignorance in those whom you should instruct" (MF 153,1). Their lives must be like those of the angels (MD 50,3), their piety and virtue must be uncommonly great in order that they may be worthy of this ministry (MF 110,1), they must also have enough knowledge in order to teach children the good and sound doctrine of the Church (MF 120,1), in such a way that they are well instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion (MF 175,3).

Several meditations describe **the state of life** of the Brother: retreat (MF 135,1), separation from the world in order to lead a life superior to that of nature and human inclinations (MD 58,3), regularity (MF 131,2), detachment from creatures (MF 180,2), withdrawal from secular and outside interests (MF 114,3), temperance (MF 136,1). Others emphasise rather **the zeal of the Christian educator** who makes his words effective (MD 2,2), the application and the zeal in his employment that the Lord asks of him (MF 93,3). God, in fact, will ask everyone to give an account of the zeal with which he acquitted himself of the duties of his employment (MF 140,2).

What is at stake, is **the salvation of children** (MD 56,1), of our neighbour (MD 58,3), of souls, "which is the purpose of your state and your employment" (MF 107,3). To achieve it, it is necessary to form children in the spirit of Christianity (MD 6,2), the spirit of religion and Christianity (MF 186,2). It is necessary also "to prevent your children from becoming a prey to vice and impiety" (MF 132,3) and touch the heart of wayward children. "In order to contribute to the good of the Church" and of the State, it is necessary to make true Christians of the children, open to the truths of the faith and the maxims of the holy Gospel, not neglecting at the same time to teach them to read, write and any other skills your ministry re-

quires you to teach (MF 160,3). MF 180,3, in its turn, describes pious and recollected children, industrious at school and at home.

However, this ministry is not without its **trials, afflictions and persecutions** (MF 78,3), its insults, injuries, calumnies and persecutions (MF 140,3 quoting 2 Co 12,10). This is the only kind of gratitude we should expect from teaching children and especially the poor (MF 155,3). "And after having exhausted yourself in this noble work of your apostolate, expect no other recompense here below than to suffer and die" (MF 175,3).

It remains to speak of the importance of the interior source of this commitment which is capable of taking over completely the personality of the minister, as in the case of the ecstatic and enraptured Brother Dominique standing in front of his class, and saying to the inspector as he pointed to the children: "I see only God". School duties performed in this way, far from disturbing the deep recollection of Brother Dominique, actually nourished it (CL 8,B,77). He was putting into practice the teaching of De La Salle: "You should learn to recognise Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to teach. Adore him in their person [...] since the poor are the members of Christ" (MF 96,3).

The meditation for the feast of St Nicholas offers us a mystical approach to educational work: "You are under the obligation to instruct the poor. You should therefore have a great tenderness towards them and supply their spiritual wants to the best of your ability, looking upon these children as members of Jesus Christ and as his much loved ones. The faith which animates you should lead you to respect Jesus Christ in their person, and should make you prefer them to the rich ones of earth since they are the living images of Jesus Christ our Divine Master" (MF 80,3).

5. THE THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY IN THE "MEDITATIONS FOR THE TIME OF RETREAT"

5.1. The literary genre

The sixteen meditations composed by De La Salle, known to us as the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* also said "Meditations on the Employment", occupy a special place in his writings. Numbered 193 to 208 ever since the 1922 edition, these texts were tra-

ditionally used by the Brothers, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to stimulate their thinking during their annual eight day retreat.

An analysis of the meditations shows first of all that De La Salle's attention is centred throughout on the apostolate, and that references to the community

and religious life of the Brothers are absent. Words such as community, society, director, rule, regularity, obedience, renouncement, separation from the world, etc, are not used. State occurs twice, Brothers only in the titles (MR 202, 203, 206, 208) and in MR 208,2 ("O, what joy a Brother of the Christian Schools will have..."). Institute is used only in MR 207,3 ("That it may please him to make your Institute grow") and retreat only in the title. What we have said here confirms that essentially, that is, by its argumentation, this work is addressed, as the frontispiece informs us, to all persons who are employed in the education of young people.

5.2. The Christian schools in salvation history

If we bear in mind that the sixteen meditations are constructed on the chiasma pattern,⁸ we see also that De La Salle has given them a "historical" dimension. The first two show the state of abandonment of the children of the artisans and the poor before the exercise of the ministry, and the two last ones contemplate the effects of its redemptive action in its heavenly reward. MR 193 presents as follows the ministry of men in salvation history, from the creation of light to the unveiling of the glory of God:

- God reveals himself as the Truth,
- men need to be instructed about it through the ministry of other men whom God awakens, calls and sends for this purpose (MR 193,1).

MR 193,2 and 194,1 look with the eyes of faith at the lives of the children of the artisans and the poor: the inability of their parents to provide education for them, the conflict between their physical survival and this education, the inability of parents to transmit the faith because of their lack of Christian formation.⁹

"In his providential care, God has appointed others to take the place of fathers and mothers in this responsibility. He sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and his mysteries. [...] You have been called by God to this ministry. Use these gifts you have received [...] in order to fulfil the main duties of fathers and mothers towards their children" (MR 193,2).

And so, God gives children teachers to accomplish this task, which is to announce the Gospel of his Son

(1 Co 3,9). "This is why you must glory in your ministry and keep trying to save some of these children" (MR 193,3 quoting Rm 11,13). God has made you **his ministers in order to reconcile others to him.**

MR 194 indicates the practical means by which this ministry is exercised: **the establishment of the Christian Schools**, the gratuity of these schools, the children occupied all day long, vigilant teachers who wish to form them in piety. The term ministry is not used.

However, in the same way as MR 193 shows that "it is God in his providence who has established the Christian Schools", it is clear also that **the Christian School is where the ministry of its teachers is carried out.** MR 207,3 sees as a reward, even in this life, the fact that "by means of the Christian Schools, the practice of religion and piety has increased among the faithful, especially among the artisans and the poor. [...] Thank God every day, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, that it has pleased him to establish this great good and to help the Church. Pray to him fervently that it will please him to make your Institute grow and to make it bear fruit day after day".

The parable of the talents speaks of another reward, that of receiving "a more extended ministry" and a greater facility in bringing about the conversion of souls (MR 207,1). As talents are not given to be hidden away, a minister is responsible for his own cooperation in the mission of salvation.

5.3. Cooperators of Jesus Christ

MR 195-196 and 205-206 remind the ministers of Jesus Christ of the gifts they have received and of the fact that they will have to render an account of the use they make of them. No trace of Quietism about this! Christ died for mankind, but his grace requires the cooperation of our will: "Each of us must complete and finish the work of our salvation. [...] Since you are obliged to help your disciples to save themselves, [...] you must teach them to benefit from the death of Jesus Christ Our Lord, in order to make its fruits and merits efficacious in themselves. Since you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must do it as representing Jesus Christ himself (MR 195,1 & 2). The identity of the minister must be visible and recognised by his pupils. Jesus who wants them to look upon the teacher as they would upon himself, gives the teacher authority over them.

The Spirit of God will make him triumph over the obstacles opposed to their salvation (MR 195,1). The trinitarian structure of this passage should be noted.

Being an ambassador (cf. 2 Co 5,18f) is no sinecure! The minister is expected to have the dedication of the Good Shepherd who looks for the lost sheep, and the apostolic prayer of one who has faith in God's will to save all mankind through his own humble efforts: "You must therefore devote yourself very thoroughly to prayer in order to succeed in your ministry. You must constantly represent the needs of your disciples to Jesus Christ, explaining to him the difficulties you experience in guiding them. [...] Jesus Christ [...] will not fail to grant you what you ask" (MR 196,1). Representing Jesus Christ means proclaiming the truth about things, persons and events, a necessary condition for obtaining the conversion of hearts (MR 196,1) to the Gospel of the Beatitudes (MR 196,2).¹⁰

The teacher must read the Gospel to see **how Jesus formed his Apostles**, who were his cooperators, to exercise their ministry (*id.*), by proposing to them evangelical paradoxes which, then as now, run counter to the received wisdom of the "world".

The Utopia proposed by De La Salle is a realistic one,¹¹ because the Gospel can change the world. He has to begin, however, by changing the mentality of the minister, making him enter intimately into the views and intentions of Christ (MR 196,3) and by ridding his mind of all human views and vain glory (MR 196,3).

"It is God who has given you the ministry that you exercise" (MR 205,1) and who will ask you to render an account of "the salvation of the souls of the children entrusted to your care. You will have to answer for it on the Day of Judgment, just as you will for your own. [...] God will begin by making you give an account of their souls before making you give an account of your own" (MR 205,2), because, **by procuring God's salvation for young people, the Christian teacher procures his own**. These are not two separate responsibilities: "Have you up to present looked upon the salvation of your pupils as your personal concern so long as they are in your care? You have exercises established for your own sanctification. However, if you have an ardent zeal for those whom you are charged to instruct, you will not fail to perform them and relate them to this purpose" (*id.*).

We have already met the 3rd point of this meditation when considering salvation in the context of a Church, full of glory, without stain, wrinkle or fault. Children are its most innocent part, called to be saints and to form that perfect man who is Christ, so that they may be so united with and in the Church that, through the secret virtue that Jesus Christ gives to all his members, they may share in the promises of God in Jesus Christ. **In their ministry, Christian teachers work to build up and support the Church**, having been engaged to do this by Jesus Christ.

MR 206 helps the teacher to **evaluate in practical terms the means of salvation he uses in his work with young people**:

- To instruct them in order to enlighten the eyes of their heart.
- Teach them catechism and prepare them to frequent the sacraments.
- Instruct them in secular subjects, such as reading, writing and arithmetic, without neglecting to form them in piety.
- Watch over them in and out of school. The Founder mentions some possible shortcomings: neglecting the most ignorant or the poorest, having favourites, wasting time, neglecting to continue one's own instruction, losing interest in the everyday life of the pupils...

The 3rd point stresses the purity of intention necessary in order to be united with Jesus Christ, the seriousness, the zeal, the moral purity, the patience and the mastery of one's passions in order to fulfil one's ministry. This is the mystical and ascetic path we have already met in the MD and MF.

5.4. The mission of salvation and conflicts

MR 197 and 198 compare the ministry of the Christian teacher with that of guardian angels: making children practise the Gospel, young creatures who have not yet attained the maturity of men. The Christian teacher must give them a taste of the Gospel maxims and introduce them to their practice (MR 197,2 & 198,2-3).

All this requires vigilance and discernment. Vigilance is needed to see the obstacles to the good of their soul; discernment, to prevent them from falling, as far as possible: "It is the main reason why God has entrusted you with so holy a ministry" (MR 197,3). "You must, in imitation of the great Apostle" (cf. 1 Th 2,12) encourage them to make their lives worthy

of God, "since God has called them to his Kingdom. Your zeal must go so far in order to achieve this that you are ready to give your very life for the children entrusted to you. This is how dear to you they must be" (1 Th 2,8). "It is your duty therefore to reprimand those who are unruly and ensure they give up their former life" (MR 198,2).

Inspired by Ep 4,30-32, MR 198,3 lists the points the Christian teacher must teach his pupils if he is to accomplish his ministry:

- Not to sadden the Holy Spirit whose seal they received in baptism,
 - to renounce their past life, and in particular lying,
 - to love one another as Jesus Christ has loved them.
- The Christian school is a place where true Christian life is learnt.

The Christian school is seen to be a place where children are taught to lead **a truly Christian life**.

MR 203 and 204, which in the chiasma structure balance MR 197 and 198, teach the art of dealing with conflict, something inevitable in education, which is intended to help young people acquire "the freedom which Jesus obtained for us" by dying for us (MR 203,2 quoting Ga 3,41). The Brother can experience the God who saves in all aspects of his professional activities, and these include the most difficult ones of his ministry,¹² such as having to "correct" young people, that is, to work on their conversion. De La Salle does not refer to ministry here in so many words, but it is certainly in the forefront of his mind when he reminds teachers that **they take the place of parents and pastors of the Church**, and speaks of "the function with which God has honoured them" (MR 203,3).

MR 204 describes this salutary method of warning and correcting young people. The teacher recollects himself, putting himself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to see what is involved, and assesses the motives of the youngsters so that they can accept their punishment as a remedy for their fault and as a means of becoming better behaved (MR 204,1). All the time, he maintains self-control, inspired by charity and zeal for the salvation of the souls of his pupils (MR 204,3).¹³

5.5. Building the Church with zeal

The heart of the "Meditations on the Employment" (MR 199 to 202, the central part of the chiasma struc-

ture) speaks of the Church and of zeal. It is here that we find the highest concentration of references to the ministry of the Christian teacher. As J.L. Schneider points out,¹⁴ we can see that the Church at the end of the 17th century accepted with difficulty De La Salle's new vision, and showed scant appreciation for the Brothers. The Founder was able to see beyond the image and even more the reality of a clerical Church tied in with the aristocracy, of male religious life largely in a state of crisis, of theological and pastoral conflicts connected with Jansenism, Quietism and Gallicanism, which drained the life out of Catholicism. ME 106 paints the picture of a Church that is very Roman, with bishops as the first among "the ministers of Jesus Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (ME 106,3 quoting 1 Co 4,1).

In the two other cases in which this quotation from the Epistle to the Corinthians figures in the MR, it is applied to teachers. At this point, however, we are being given the broader view. The Church is founded on the Apostles, especially Paul (MR 199,1 & 3), on the bishops who evangelised and on the saints (MR 199,3). "Jesus told his Apostles: 'I must announce the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, for this is why I have been sent'. You too should say that it is for this purpose that Jesus Christ has sent you, and that the Church whose ministers you are employs you. Take all the means necessary, therefore, to fulfil this function with as much zeal and success as the saints before you" (MR 199,2). "Thank God for the grace he has given you in your employment of sharing in the ministry of the holy Apostles and of the principal bishops and pastors of the Church. Take pride in your ministry, by becoming, as St Paul says, worthy ministers of the New Testament" (MR 199,3 quoting Rm 11,13 & 2 Co 3,6).

The Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, creates the ministries it needs in order to grow and to fulfil its mission. Paul planted the Church in various places and, as a good master-builder, laid the foundation of the building of faith and religion which God erected in the towns where he had announced the Gospel (MR 199,1). "Without comparing yourself with this great saint (and bearing in mind the due proportion between your work and his), you can say that you are doing the same thing as he did, and that you are exercising the same ministry in your profession. For this reason, you must look upon your employment, entrusted to you

by pastors, fathers and mothers, as one of the most important and most necessary functions in the Church" (*id.*).

The principal mission of the Church is in fact to instruct those who are baptised, to announce the Gospel following the example of the Apostles as well as that of Jesus Christ himself. "You are successors to the Apostles in their task of catechising and instructing the poor. If you want to make your ministry as useful as it can be to the Church, you must teach them catechism every day" (MR 200,1). Like them, you must also afterwards "leave your work and devote yourself to reading and mental prayer", so as to continue your own formation and obtain the graces "you need in the exercise of this employment, according to the spirit and intentions of the Church which entrusted you with it" (*id.*).

In order to announce the Gospel, the teacher must know the text intimately as the real "Good News". To announce it to children, he must make it understandable (MR 200,2). If it is going to bear fruit in the children, they have to be prepared to receive the sacraments (MR 200,2), and made to perform the good works they are capable of at their age (MR 200,3).

And so, the Founder wishes to include the ministry of Christian education with the other ministries of the Church. MR 201 deserves to be quoted in full. However, we shall restrict ourselves to the following section: "Reflect on what St Paul says, that God has established in the Church apostles, prophets and doctors (1 Co 12,28), and you will be convinced that it is he also who has established you in your employment. The same saint expresses the same thing in another way when he says that there are various ministries, each with its own function, and that the Holy Spirit manifests himself in all these gifts only for the common good, that is, for the good of the Church. To one, the Spirit gives the gift of speaking wisely, to another, the gift of faith (1 Co 12,5-9). You must not doubt that the grace God gives you by charging you to instruct children, to announce the Gospel to them, and to bring them up in the spirit of religion, is a very great gift indeed. But by calling you to this holy ministry, God requires you to acquit yourself of it with burning zeal for their salvation, because it is the work

of God" (MR 201,1).

For the teacher as for St Paul (2 Co 6,3-9), the fruit of charity and zeal is abundant patience to bear with the difficulties of the employment. As De La Salle says, "be willing to be dishonoured by men and mistreated, even to give your life for Jesus in the fulfilment of your ministry" (MR 201,1). "You must imitate God to some extent, for he so loved the souls he created that he gave his only Son" (MR 201,3 quoting Ep 5,1-2).

Then the perspective changes to salvation history as a whole. You are ministers not only of God but also of Jesus Christ and of the Church (MR 201,2), "since it is for the Church (which is the body of Christ) that you work, whose ministers you became when he commanded you to dispense his word" (MR 201,2 quoting Col 1,24f) for the sanctification of his children. Make these children become part of the structure of the Church so that they may be in a state to appear before Jesus Christ one day, filled with glory, without stain, wrinkle or defilement (Ep 5,25f), and become one day heirs of the Kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ (Rm 8,17).

Like the other meditations with even numbers, MR 202 describes the practical **aspects of zeal** that a Brother of the Christian Schools must show in his employment. Even if the term "ministry" is not used, this meditation has a number of clear analogies with MR 200 which has ministry in its title: it speaks of making children avoid sinning against God, their parents and their companions; of making them do good and the good actions they are capable of (always telling the truth, forgiving insults, praying...), not to obtain the approval of others, but because of their relationship with God. Like Elias, the Brother must be able to say to them: "I am so zealous for the glory of my God that I cannot allow you to renounce the covenant you contracted with him in baptism, nor the status of children of God that you received at the same time" (MR 202,1). But his words will have no effect if his example does not match his instruction, especially where children are concerned, because they model their conduct on that of their teachers (MR 202,3). The Word he proclaims as a minister comes back to challenge him in their person.

6. SCRIPTURAL SOURCES OF DE LA SALLE'S TEACHING ON THE MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The "Meditations on the Employment" make abundant use of scripture and include, in particular, many allusions to St Paul and quotations from him. Br Miguel Campos,¹⁵ who has demonstrated this so well, shows how the Founder draws attention to "the gift of speaking with wisdom and to the gift of faith" which the Brother receives from God. De La Salle declares in Pauline language that the ministry of the teacher is established by God and that it is a specific gift which manifests the action of the Spirit for the good of the Church. We will restrict ourselves to pointing out some of the important scriptural texts which helped De La Salle to understand the ministry of education.¹⁶

The missionary activity presented to us in **the first letter to the Corinthians**, shows clearly the difficulty of rooting the Christian message in a culture that up till then has been alien to it. De La Salle applies to the teachers of the Christian Schools Paul's description of his work of evangelisation in Corinth: "For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the Good News, and not [...] in the terms of philosophy, lest the cross of Jesus Christ be destroyed by them" (1 Co 1,17; cf. MR 193,3; 199,3). "We have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit that comes from God, so that we may know the gifts that God gives us" (1 Co 2,12; cf. MF 189,1). "We help God in his work; you are the field which he cultivates, you are the building he erects. I have laid the foundation, like a good architect, according to the grace God has given me" (1 Co 3,9-10; cf. MR 193,2 & 3; 199,1; 205,1).

MD 3,2; MR 193,1; MF 166,3; MR 205,1 and MR 201,2 quote 1 Co 4,1-2: "Let each one of us consider himself as a minister¹⁷ of Jesus Christ and a dispenser of the mysteries of God. What is needed is a faithful dispenser". St Paul ends this section by describing how he is despised: "We are treated as the offal of the world [...] and the scum of the earth" (1 Co 4,13; cf. MF 95,3; 140,3; 166,3).

Further on, St Paul declares that, in order to preach the Gospel freely, he has given up his rights: "Am I not free? Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Our Lord Jesus Christ? Are you not my work in Jesus Christ?" (1 Co 9,1; cf. MR 207,2 & 199,1 which, like 1 Co 4,15, introduce the idea of spiritual father-

hood). "And what is my reward? It is to preach the Gospel freely, without it costing anything those who hear me" (1 Co 9,18; cf. MR 194,1).

Various disorders in Christian assemblies oblige Paul to explain some of the criteria governing charisms and ministries: the common good (1 Co 12,12,30), the edification of the community (14,1-19) and, above all, love (13,1-13). MR 201,1 quotes 1 Co 12,4-9: "There is a diversity of gifts, but it is the same Spirit; a diversity of ministries (*diakonia*), but there is only one and the same Lord; and there are different tasks, but there is only one and the same God who does everything in all of us. The Holy Spirit, however, appears in each one of us only for the common good. One receives from the Holy Spirit the gift of speaking with wisdom; another, from the same Spirit, the gift of speaking with knowledge; yet another, the gift of faith from this same Spirit. [...] And God has established in the Church 1st apostles, 2nd prophets, 3rd doctors..." (1 Co 12,28; cf. MF 170,3).

In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul defends his apostolate against his adversaries: "Do we need, like certain people, letters of recommendation for you or from you? [...] You know that you are the letter dictated to us by Jesus Christ and which we have written down, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God, and not on tables of stone, but on the tables of flesh of your hearts" (2 Co 3,1-3; cf. MR 201,2; 195,2). Paul continues, referring to "the ministry of the new Covenant". (De La Salle speaks of the "ministers of the New Testament" in MR 199,3). "God has made us qualified to be ministers (*diakonoi*) of the new covenant. [...] If the ministry of death [...], the ministry of condemnation was glorious, how much more will not the ministry (*diakonia*) of justice be so" (2 Co 3,6f). "Since God, in his mercy, has given us such a ministry, we do not lose courage, but we detest base and shameful actions which are done in secret, not acting with deceitfulness, not watering down the word of God, but acquiring, before him and in the minds of every human being, the glory of discovering the truth" (2 Co 4,1-2; cf. MR 193,1).

"For we are not preaching ourselves, but Jesus Christ Our lord, and we declare that we are your serv-

ants in Jesus, because God, who commanded that light should come from darkness, has himself enlightened our hearts, so that we can enlighten those of others by revealing to them the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. However, we carry this treasure in earthenware vessels, so that the greatness of its power may be attributed to God and not to us. We are hard-pressed on all sides, but not crushed. We are confused, but we do not despair. We are persecuted, but not abandoned. We are knocked down, but not killed" (2 Co 4,5-9; cf. MF 166,3).

The exercise of the apostolic ministry is described by Paul as being that of an ambassador, whose function is to reconcile in the name of love: "Because the love of God overwhelms us, when we consider that if one man died for all, then all men are dead. And Jesus Christ died for everyone, so that all those who are alive should not live any more for themselves, but for the one who died and rose again for them. [...] And all comes from God who has reconciled us with himself through Jesus Christ, and has made us his ministers (*diakonia*) in order to reconcile men with him. For God was in Jesus Christ through whom he reconciled the world with himself, not imputing to men their sins, and he has entrusted to us the words of reconciliation. We are therefore the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and it is as if God himself exhorted you through us" (2 Co 5,14-20; cf. MR 201,2 & 193,3).

Chapter 10 of the **letter to the Romans** recalls the role of the profession of faith in salvation: "Whoever calls on the Lord's name will be saved. But how can they call upon someone if they do not believe in him? Or how will they believe in someone they have not heard of? And how will they hear of him if they have no preacher? [...] Faith comes therefore from what we have heard, and from what we have heard through the preaching of the word of God" (Rm 10,13-17; cf. MR 193,1). In chapter 11, the same letter announces the **final admission to salvation of the new Israel** composed of Jews and pagans: "I declare to you that as long as I am the apostle of the nations, I

shall be proud of my ministry (*diakonia*), trying to make envious those who are of the same race as I and to save a few of them" (Rm 11,13f; cf. MR 193,3; 199,3). The Brother also will try "to save a few" of the young people and "be proud of his ministry".

The letter to the Colossians opens with a prayer for the Church and a hymn to Christ. There follows a section on the apostolic ministry whose aim is to accomplish what was celebrated in the hymn: "You yourselves, whose minds were formerly alienated from him and who, because of your evil actions, were his enemies, have been reinstated in his grace. For he suffered death in his body in order to make you holy, without stain and irreproachable before him. But you must remain firm and unshakable in the faith, and immovable in the hope of the Gospel which you have heard, and which was preached to all creatures under heaven, and by the ministry (*diakonos*) to which I, Paul, have been appointed. I rejoice now in the sufferings I have to endure for you and which accomplishes in my body what is lacking in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, for his body which is the Church, and of which I was made a minister (*diakonos*) according to the command God gave me to dispense to you his word and to complete its preaching among you" (Col 1,21-25; cf. MR 195,1; 201,2; MF 112,3; 165,2).

Finally, **the first letter of St Peter** is intended to strengthen the faith of the Christians whose zeal runs the risk of weakening. He urges them to be vigilant in their common life: "Let each one use in the service of others the gifts he has received, acting as the faithful dispensers (*diakonoi*) of the various graces of God" (1 P 4,10). "If a person speaks, let it be as dispensing the word of God; if a person exercises some ministry (*diakonia*), let him do so as acting with the power given to him by God, so that God may be honoured in everything through Jesus Christ" (1 P 4,11; cf. MD 3,2). And so, those who teach are simply the voice of the one who speaks through them, when they speak of him and of what concerns him.

7. THE MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TODAY

7.1. A long silence and a rediscovery

The teaching of De La Salle on ministries did not receive the attention its importance deserved either in the Institute he founded or outside. Printed in 1730, eleven years after the death of their author, the MR went through only 5 editions in French in 230 years.¹⁸ Their distribution was almost totally restricted to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who themselves made very little use of them outside of the annual retreat where they were used as subjects for meditation. In the circulars written by the Superior Generals for the Brothers there is no quotation, let alone analysis, from them. The vocation of the Brothers was treated under the two aspects of religious life and apostolate. Ministry, in theological language, was used only in reference to the sacerdotal ministry.

The foundation of Lasallian Studies in 1956 and the thesis written by Br Michel Sauvage¹⁹ for his doctorate in theology which he defended in 1961, led to a rediscovery of the thinking of the Founder on ministries. A few months before the opening of Vatican II, the Superior General, Brother Nicet Joseph, devoted a long and important circular to "the catechetical mission" of the Brothers, which included no less than 10 quotations from the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. While not stressed the way it is today, the term minister is used.²⁰ Since then, various publications have shown how much the Brothers have become aware again of this aspect of their spiritual heritage.

7.2. An episcopal document dated 1973

In the course of its 1973 assembly, the Bishops' Conference of France adopted a study document entitled *everyone with responsibility in the Church?* The question mark at the end of the title should not deceive us: the authors of the document were looking for a positive response.²¹

God does not intend to save people separately, without mutual links between them.²² With those that accept the Gospel message he builds his Church. Living in the fulness of his Spirit, baptised people receive from him the gifts which enable them to be the leaven of his evangelisation in the world. In addition, this same Spirit enables them to have responsibilities in

the life of the Church for the various aspects of its life: worship and prayer, catechesis, apostolic formation, spiritual help, charity work, etc.

At the invitation of Vatican II, the Bishops' Conference wrote, we must change "from being a Church which is very heavily reliant on the clergy to a Church which depends on the shared responsibility of Christians according to the diversity of their ministries". Ministries are seen as service functions given to certain Christians. Apart from "ordained ministries", one can speak of "instituted ministries" in the Church, when the task accomplished by them:

- provides something necessary or useful for the common good of the community;
- has and requires the stability of a lasting and specific mission;
- is recognised in the community by its institutional character, because of a public commitment, for example, or appointment. In such cases, one can speak of fully instituted ministries.

The authors of the document feel that the Church should not restrict its point of view to that of *Ministeria quaedam* (August 15th 1972) which speaks of liturgical ministries which could be confided to lay people (and which previously were restricted to candidates for the priesthood).

7.3. The 1987 Rule²³

During the same period, documents from the Holy See continued to avoid speaking of lay ministries, restricting the term to the sacerdotal ministry or to cases of very explicit or exceptional delegation (such as during violent persecutions).

In 1982, the Roman Congregation for Catholic Education published a text entitled *The Catholic lay person, a witness to the faith in school*. The authors refrained from using the word ministry even though it figured in preliminary drafts previously made public.²⁴

Since then, other bodies within the magisterium have considered the question of ministries, but most often from a pastoral angle. The time has not yet come, it would seem, to draw conclusions: this question remains an open one in the Church. We shall bring a

temporary halt to our reflections by considering the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, a document which is in force now, and see how the mission of Christian education is carried out in Lasallian schools.

Article 3 of the *Rule* defines the purpose of the Institute: "To give a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it". We have here an instance of a ministry not only recognised, but actually entrusted by the Church to an Institute.

God raised up John Baptist de La Salle (1) and his Spirit showed him the mission his Institute was to undertake (4). The Church recognises this charism and entrusts to the Institute the apostolic ministry of Christian education.

"The Brothers, in fidelity to the call of the Spirit and the charism of their Founder, consecrate themselves to God in order to exercise, by association, their apostolic ministry of education" (2). He "consecrates himself entirely to the Holy Trinity to procure the glory of God in the ministry of Christian education" (22). "The Brothers live their faith as a gift to be used for their ministry of Christian education" (20). Each day, they "go up to God by mental prayer" (MR 198,1), as apostles responsible for the salvation of those entrusted to them. In this way they hope "to receive from the Lord the internal freedom and the spiritual discernment which their ministry requires, and the graces they need to work effectively for building up the kingdom of God" (69). Their zeal, "enlivened by the Holy Spirit, inspires their apostolic prayer and all the activities of their educational ministry" (7). "The Brothers consider their professional work as a ministry" (13), convinced that "any education that respects the human person is a way to open people to God's grace and so dispose them to accept the faith" (12).

As religious vowed to the ministry of Christian education, "the first apostolate of the Brothers consists in the witness of their consecrated life" (24). "In fulfilling their ministry [...], they are contributing, as a community, to the unique mission of the Institute within the Church" (16). The community which they constitute is "dedicated [...] to the apostolic ministry of education" (51). "The Brothers have always in view the promotion of justice [...] and either the direct or indirect service of the poor as the preferred aspect of

their ministry of education" (40). "Ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry" (17).

By approving the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian schools* by a decree published on January 26th 1987, the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes approved in it "the faithful expression of the charism of St John Baptist de La Salle and of the tradition of the Institute: consecrated to God as lay religious, the Brothers are called to provide a human and Christian education for young people, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to them".

7.4. In the context of the shared mission

The mission of the Institute comes from God and from his Spirit. The ministry can be entrusted therefore only to Christians. We have noted, however, that the work of the Institute went beyond the confines of the Church. It is reasonable to think, therefore, that persons rooted in non-Christian religious and humanistic traditions can contribute to the mission of the Institute, if they offer education that is open to the spiritual dimension of people and, consequently, to "the grace which disposes them to accept the faith" (12). However, in the case of Christian teachers, aware of the grace they received in baptism, can we say nowadays that they participate in the ministry of the Brothers — an "instituted ministry"?

The case of the Brothers themselves needs to be given some thought: how can they practise the spirituality of a minister of the Gospel when they live in a situation which is so different from the one which enabled the Founder to undertake the establishment of the Christian Schools? At the present time, in most parts of the Institute, the Brothers are in a minority in the schools in which they work. Also, and for praiseworthy motives, teaching as a profession is organised according to criteria which are more rational than relational. A teacher going from one class to another to teach a highly specialised subject cannot easily project his mission within the Church.

Without going deeply into the questions raised by this subject, we should recognise that there are nu-

merous Brothers and lay Lasallians who exercise the ministry of Christian education. We outline briefly what characterises them:

- awareness of being called by God to cooperate in his work of salvation,
- active participation in an educational team or in a community committed to the same work,
- concern for poor young people and a willingness to adapt school establishments to their needs,
- a deepening of the experience of God in this close contact with young people, with the purpose also of

preparing them better to take their place in society and the Church,

- explicit reference to the person of St John Baptist de La Salle in this process of personal and community growth.

And so it is that the term ministry, representing a new kind of force, offers a rallying point for Christians called to it by the challenges of the world, and through them, by the Holy Spirit. It is to be hoped that theological research will go on and continue to guide the growing numbers of baptised persons who will respond to this call, creating a new face of God in the Church for the salvation of the world.

¹ *Étude de mots du Vocabulaire lasallien*, Paris (photocopied document, undated, around 1990).

² SAUVAGE, M., *Catéchèse et laïcité*, p. 335. See bibliography.

³ Quoted by POUTET, Y., *Spiritualités d'enseignants*, Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, January-March 1960. (Article due to appear in CL 55).

⁴ *Règlements et méthode pour les écoles*, Paris, chez F. Muguet, 1710. Quoted by SAUVAGE, p. 412.

⁵ *Méditations pour les sœurs maîtresses des écoles charitables du Saint Enfant Jésus*, Paris, 1687. The author, François Giry (1635-1688), a Minim, became after the death of Nicolas Barré the spiritual director of the women's community founded by him (see *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*).

⁶ The preceding quotations are taken from CAMPOS, CL 46,55 and from SAUVAGE, p. 424 & 441.

⁷ Functions. Diakonia, according to the Greek text of Ac 1,25.

⁸ A stylistic arrangement of antithetical elements according to the following pattern: ABC-C'B'A'.

⁹ SCHNEIDER, J.L., *Chercheurs de Dieu avec JBS*, Paris, 1995 (photocopied document), § 4.1.

¹⁰ On the same topic see MD 33, which shows the teacher, like the Good Shepherd, using discernment (1st pt.), in his relations with his disciples (2nd pt.) and as an attempt to adapt to them (3rd pt.).

¹¹ SCHNEIDER, § 4.2.

¹² SCHNEIDER, § 4.3.

¹³ It is worth noting the connection between this norma-

tive description of De La Salle and the social ideal of his times, the ideal of the *honnête homme* who, by exercising self-control, is able to control also any situation that arises, however heroic it may be.

¹⁴ SCHNEIDER, § 4.4.

¹⁵ CL 45 & 46. See bibliography.

¹⁶ Scripture quotations in English are taken from the Jerusalem Bible. De La Salle uses the French translation by Amelote (1685). Introductory remarks are taken from the TOB Bible.

¹⁷ Amelote translated the Greek *hupeteres* by *minister* (minister). The French translation printed in Brussels in 1700 does the same. At the present time B J and TOB translate it by *serviteur* (servant), Osty, by *auxiliaire* (auxiliary).

¹⁸ See CL 13,III.

¹⁹ A thesis published under the title *Catéchèse et Laïcité*. See the bibliography.

²⁰ Circular 371, dated February 2nd 1962, *The Catechetical Mission of the Brother of the Christian Schools*.

²¹ *Tous responsables dans l'Eglise?* Plenary Assembly of the French Hierarchy, Paris, Centurion, 1973. See on p. 55 the note on the word *ministre* by Mgr Raymond Boucheix.

²² Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 9; *Gaudium et Spes*, 32.

²³ *Rules of the Brothers of the Christian schools*, Rome, 1987. The numbers in brackets in the text refer to the articles of this Rule.

²⁴ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in schools, Witnesses to the faith*, Rome, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1982.

Complementary themes

Apostle	Consecration	Mission
Association	Disciples	Reward of the teacher
Brothers of the Christian Schools	Education	Salvation
Christian teacher	Employment	Teacher-pupil relation
Community, society, Institute	Formation	Zeal

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Br Hilaire RAHARILALAO and Br Alain HOURY

84. MODESTY

Summary

1. The context

1.1 .The meaning of "modesty" in De La Salle's time 1,2.Christian modesty.

2. "Modesty" in De La Salle's writings

2.1 .For schoolchildren and the general public 2.2.For the Brothers 2.3.The meaning of "modesty" for De La Salle.

3. "The admirable modesty of M. de La Salle" (CL 8,307).

1. THE CONTEXT

1.1. The meaning of "modesty" in De La Salle's time

Like the Latin root *modus* from which it comes, modesty means moderation, measure, control. In De La Salle's time, the word meant the practice of controlling all the postures and movements of the body and the use of the eyes and speech.

The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (1721), gives two synonyms for modesty: *pudeur* (feeling of shame, or guilt), and *retenue* (control, or restraint). This indicates two separate meanings:

- an interior attitude. *Trévoux* gives the example: "Modesty is a control of the mind that leads a person to think less of self than of others". As such, it resembles humility.

- exterior behavior. We read in the same dictionary: "The modesty of the clergy gives much edification to the people; their modesty must become apparent in their words, in their actions, in their meals, and in their posture".

This twofold meaning can be seen also when false modesty is denounced, an interior attitude opposed to modesty betrayed by a forced exterior demeanour. The authors of the *Trévoux* dictionary (Jesuits) denounce it without reserve: "False modesty is the ultimate accomplishment of vanity."

1.2. Christian modesty

The Vulgate uses *modestia* to translate the Greek *epieikeia* and *praotes*, meaning goodness, or gentleness. Saint Paul uses these Greek words to describe the goodness, or gentleness of Christ (2 Co 10,1); the word carries the same meaning in 2 Tm 2,25, Col 3,12, Tt 3,2, Ph 4,5, and 1 P 3,16. This sense of the gentleness expressed by the Vulgate's use of *modestia* is lost in the French *modestie*, as also in the English *modesty*.

Saint Ambrose (f 397) wrote a treatise for priests in which *modestia* indicates an interior spirit of humility. To his description he adds directives for the practice of silence, moderation in the manner of speaking, and the control of all bodily movements. This seems to mark the appearance of a new understanding of modesty, based on the control of speech and bodily attitudes.

The *Rule* of Saint Benedict (f ca 543) speaks of *modestia* as the 12th degree of humility, taking the publican in Jesus' parable as the model of the interior attitude proper to the virtue. He exhorts the monks to let all their exterior behavior reflect this inner attitude of fear of the judgment of God because of their sins. The emphasis is placed on an interior attitude which will allow the external demeanour to follow quite naturally, without going into details.

The Franciscans, at the end of the Middle Ages, were trained to an elaborate practice of exterior *modestia*. In later years, Saint Ignatius (+ 1556) drew up a list of thirteen precise rules of the virtue which

influenced all the spiritual training of men and women in the 17th and 18th centuries, including Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

2. "MODESTY" IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS

2.1. For schoolchildren and the general public

De La Salle makes reference to modesty in all his writings. However, in three of his works he develops his doctrine on modesty with considerable detail; it seems adequate for the purpose of this article to focus on these writings.

The *Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* was published in 1703 and probably written between 1694 and 1702 (cf. CL 19). This was a text in reading for the schools conducted by the Brothers and was very popular during the 18th and 19th centuries, as more than 150 reprintings and editions testify.

A critical edition by Brother Albert Valentin, FSC, was published by Ligel (France) in 1956. An English translation of the original text was published in 1990 by Lasallian Publications, Romeoville, Illinois, under the title, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*.

While one purpose was to provide a reading text for the students who had mastered the fundamentals of reading in French, the subject matter itself was aimed at helping the students learn and practice the polite manners of the society of 18th Century France. In writing his book De La Salle reflected his own bourgeois upbringing as well as familiarity with several treatises on the topic that were published between 1649 and 1685 (cf. CL 58).

Nonetheless, for De La Salle modesty was more than a civic virtue. In his Preface he insists on the Christian motivation — the interior attitude — that is essential to his idea of modesty. In one sense this is original to De La Salle, in that he does not make interior humility the motive for the virtue of modesty. He states that when parents want to train children in the practice of bodily care and simple modesty they should "carefully lead them to be motivated by the presence of God... In other words, children should do these things out of respect for God in whose presence they are" (CL 19,m = RB 0,0,6).

A few pages later, De La Salle makes a distinction between modesty and civility, the former being the virtue that governs one's exterior behaviour, whether one is alone or with others, the latter being the virtue that governs one's exterior behaviour in the presence and in relationships with others (CL 19,vi = RB 0,0,15).

2.2. For the Brothers

The *Recueil de différents petits traités à l'usage des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* was probably written by De La Salle between 1700 and 1715, and possibly first published in 1705, though the earliest extant edition is dated 1711 (cf. CL 15). In a handwritten text consisting of a single page with no date, De La Salle writes that this "small volume" contains "the principal rules and practices which are common in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools" (CL 15,x). Modesty is the eighth of the eleven virtues listed and described under the heading, "Principal virtues that the Brothers ought to practice" (CL 15,175 = R 15,8,1).

The *Règles communes des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, based on the 1705 text, had sections added or modified in 1718. One of the additions was a chapter entitled "On Modesty", which reproduced in its 15 articles material from the 1711 *Recueil*, material which itself was largely borrowed from the *Regulae Modestiae* of St Ignatius (Cf. CL 16,44-47).

According to the biographer Blain, the Brothers attending the 1717 chapter discussed the revision of the 1705 *Règles communes*, and then asked the Founder to draw up a revised text as he thought fit (CL 8,136).

2.3. The meaning of "modesty" for De La Salle

The *Recueil* makes clear that the virtue of modesty is important for the Brother of the Christian Schools: this virtue is necessary "for their profession".

In his description of modesty De La Salle does not speak of any motive except to give good example to

everyone, to give evidence of a well-ordred interior by exterior actions, especially in view of the Brother's role as teacher — and probably as one professing to be specially consecrated to God. He evidently takes for granted the motivation he stressed in the *Rules of Christian Decorum*. The *Recueil* was used as part of the training of the Brothers in the novitiate and in community (cf. CL 15,ix), so that the fundamental motivation for all the life of the Brothers could be presumed for the virtues described in the *Recueil*.

There are 15 articles under the heading of modesty in the *Recueil*. The first article is an introductory and specifies that this virtue governs exterior actions with great modesty, humility, together with good behavior appropriate to Brother's profession (CL 15,175 = R 21,1).

Inserting the word "humility" in this article might be construed to mean that De La Salle considered humility as an interior motivation for the Brother's practice of modesty. However, this would be the only explicit reference to such interior motivation in De La Salle's treatment of modesty. To say the least, he does not put emphasis on that motive as much as he puts on the presence of God in the *Règles de la bienséance*.

The ten following articles describe in detail the correct way to hold one's head; the proper expression on one's face, joy rather than sadness, and without frowning, or wrinkling the nose; the look of the eyes, especially when in the presence of women or superiors; the position of the lips, hands, arms, and legs; the

manner of talking and walking, alone or with others; and the proper care of one's clothing. Such attention to detail probably reflects the social practices of 18th century France as much as it does the traditions of spiritual doctrine.

Br Maurice Auguste Hermans has shown in parallel columns (CL 16,41f) how the text of the *Recueil* became the source of Chapter xxi of the 1718 *Regles Communes*, and that the literary source of both these texts is the *Regulce Modestix-oi* Saint Ignatius. It is clear, then, that De La Salle intended the practices of external modesty to conform to the traditions of the religious orders and institutes of the 16th and 17th centuries.

We should note that article 6 of the *Regles* does not come from the *Recueil*: "Recollection will be considered by the Brothers of such great importance that they will regard it as one of the principal supports of the Society and look upon immodesty (*dissipation*) of the eyes as the source of all kinds of disorder in a community".

It seems that this texts alludes to the "interior recollection" which is listed by the *Recueil* as one of the four "interior supports of the society", together with mental prayer, the spirit of faith and the presence of God (CL 15,6 = R 4,1). The use of the word "support" in article 6 of chapter XXI is not fortuitous therefore. Very probably it is a reference to this passage in the *Recueil*, as well as to another section of *the Rules*, article 8 of chapter XVI, "On Regularity".

3. THE "ADMIRABLE MODESTY OF M. DE LA SALLE" (CL 8,307)

In book four (or rather in part two of volume two) of his biography of De La Salle, Blain describes the modesty of the Founder in his usual elaborate language, and compares it with that of several great saints (CL 8,307-316).

Blain treats this topic in a section of chapter III entitled "On the Charity of the Holy priest", after speaking of De La Salle's love of God shown by his attachment to prayer and by his constant recall of the presence of God. Modesty is viewed as the external reflection (radiance would be a better word) of De La Salle's interior union with God.

Blain also recalls the following anecdote: "A Brother Director complained to him one day that the

Brothers in his charge had no confidence in him. 'It's your fault', he was told. 'Why don't you try to acquire the equanimity that you need so much. The Brothers complain that they never see you even-tempered and generally agree that you look like a prison door'"(CL 8,312).

This was clearly a contrast with the altruistic dispositions of De La Salle and his affable behaviour which drew people and, in particular, children to him. As the same biographer said elsewhere, basing himself on a note a Brother had sent him: "He was never seen angry, never upset, never sad and he rarely laughed. He was always the same" (CL 8,311). That was, after all, his ideal of modesty.

De La Salle associated the external practices of modesty with the internal practice of remembering the presence of God. In adding the topic of modesty to the Brothers' Rule in 1718, he did not want to minimize the inner motivation for the details of the Brothers' life. This is clearly indicated in the other paragraphs he also added at the beginning of the chapters on the spirit of faith (RC 2,1) and regularity, whose first article recalled the primacy of charity, and article 8, "the internal supports" of the Institute (RC 16,1 & 8).

In particular he wanted the Brothers to be motivated in all the small details of their lives by an awareness, or remembrance, of the presence of God in this world, to link their lives and their everyday actions to God's plan for it. From motives of faith and to make their pupils have confidence in them, the Founder wanted the Brothers to have a dignified bearing and to appear self-possessed in their teaching apostolate. In this way, the pupils would respect their teachers and learn as much from their example as from their words.

Complementary themes

Christian teacher
Example - Edification

Humility
Joy

Peace
Retreat
Supports of the Society

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85. OBEDIENCE

Summary

- 1. The use of "obedience" and "to obey" in Lasallian writings.**
- 2. Obedience as portrayed in the "Meditations for all the Sundays of the Year"**
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- 4. Obedience as portrayed in the "Common Rules"**
 - 4.1. The chapter "On Obedience"
 - 4.2. Dependence and permission.
- 5. The meaning of Lasallian obedience**
 - 5.1. Biblical references
 - 5.2. MD 6: Conforming oneself to the will of God.
- 6. The practice of the Founder**
 - 6.1. Relations with his spiritual directors
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 - 6.3. Relations with Brother superiors
 - 6.4. When acting as Superior.
- 7. Obedience according to the Rule, between 1726 and 1986**
 - 7.1. From the Bull of Approbation to 1947
 - 7.2. Following Vatican II
 - 7.3. Today.
- 8. Conclusion: obedience and love.**

The name of St John Baptist de La Salle is linked with obedience, at least in the minds of the older Brothers. This is perhaps the result of Blain's insistence on "his spirit of obedience" in his biography (CL 8,423f). It is due more likely, however, to the Founder's own writings about this virtue, especially in an important series of meditations.

We shall begin this article with an analysis of the use of the words "to obey" and "obedience" in the Lasallian corpus. We shall discover, however, that their use there does not express the totality of the Holy Founder's teaching on this topic.

1. THE USE OF "OBEDIENCE" AND "TO OBEY" IN LASALLIAN WRITINGS

At the time of the Founder, there was no shortage of written material dealing with obedience, intended in particular for men and women religious, for consecrated persons and those living in communities. This material included, for example, the works of St Teresa

of Avila, Rodriguez, Modeste de Saint Amable, Tronson, etc. What is remarkable about all these treatises, apart from their titles, is the great number of examples taken from the Fathers of the Church, who clearly provided a common source.

Was this also De La Salle's approach? The word "obedience" is used 193 times in his writings:

DA: 1, DB: 2, DC: 9, E: 1, EM: 9, FD: 1, L: 9, R: 43, RC: 5, RD: 2, MD: 96, MF: 13, EP: 2.

"To obey" is used 165 times:

CE: 3, DA: 15, DB: 12, DC: 3, E: 2, EM: 5, FD: 1, GA: 9, L: 7, L: 3, MD: 65, MF: 6, R: 28, RC: 3, RD: 3.

93 % of the use of "obedience" and 69 % of the use of "to obey" occur in writings intended primarily for the Brothers. This is a clear indication that the writer was concerned above all with religious obedience.

The works intended for pupils or lay people are different. For example, DA contains only one use of "obedience" : "Wives owe their husbands [...] obedience" (CL 20,127 = DA 206,0,11).

Overall, the use of these two terms is in connection with:

- parents (fathers, mothers)

DA: 5, DB : 7, E: 1, GA: 4, total: 18.

- masters (employers)

DB: 1,E: 1, GA: 1, total: 3.

- masters (teachers)

CE : 3 (regarding correction)

- various

DB: 1,1: 1, total: 2.

One is obliged to obey God (25 times), Christ (4), the Gospel (1), the Church (3), the Jewish Law (1), inspiration (1), the Pope (1), bishops (1), parish priests (2), superiors (11), Directors (7), infirmarians (1), equals (1), inferiors (1), those in charge of the house (1), officials (1), a certain individual (1).

One owes obedience to God (3 times), the superior (1), the husband (1), persons (1), those who have authority over one (1).

Although nothing is stated explicitly, it is abundantly clear from the context that when these two terms are used on other occasions they refer to consecrated persons and not to Christian seculars, so much so that one begins to wonder whether obedience concerns the latter at all. So, we can draw two conclusions from what we have said so far:

1. The use of these terms applies almost exclusively to religious obedience. Even the statement: "This is a completely natural and human obedience" refers to a person living in community, but who wishes to base his conduct solely on his "temperament" and his "inclination", whereas he is invited to act through faith, with the spirit of faith.

2. The use of these terms is most frequent in the *Meditations for all the Sundays of the Year* (MD) and the *Collection* (R): 72 % (obedience) and 57 % (to obey). Consequently we shall devote most of our attention to these two works.

2. OBEDIENCE AS PORTRAYED IN THE "MEDITATIONS FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR"

2.1. Introduction

If we consider the three Lasallian collections of meditations, we find that the use of the word obedience occurs only in 14 of the 77 MD, in 9 of the 115 MF, and in none of the MR. Lasallian doctrine on this virtue is contained, therefore, in only 23 of the 208 texts. The *Meditations for all the Sundays of the Year* include the use of the word obedience 96 times (out of 193), and to obey 65 times (out of 165).

Apart from four meditations in which obedience is used once only, there is a series of 9 consecutive meditations in MD (MD 7 to MD 15) and an isolated meditation (MD 57) which are devoted to this topic and are entitled as follows:

MD 7	Necessity of obedience
MD 8	On the exactitude of obedience
MD 9	On the faith that one must show in obedience
MD 10	On the fidelity one must have to obedience despite the most violent temptations
MD 11	On the excellence and merit of obedience
MD 12	On the abundant fruit produced by what is done through obedience, even when the action itself appears of little consequence
MD 13	On the need that persons consecrated to God have of being exercised in the practice of obedience
MD 14	On the three sorts of disobedient religious
MD 15	On the three kinds of religious who obey without having the merit of blind obedience
MD 57	We always succeed when we act through obedience.

The intention of the writer is clear. In this series of meditations, he seeks to convince the Brothers of the need they have for obedience based on faith, and to show them its benefits, excellence, merit and fruit. He continues by pointing out the need to make efforts to acquire this virtue and to practise it. He then gives examples of persons who do not obey or do not do so sufficiently. The series is like a course on obedience. The titles give the impression of careful planning, but a reading of the texts reveals certain inconsistencies.

2.2. MD 7

2.2.1. NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE

The series starts with MD 7, entitled "On the Necessity of Obedience". De La Salle bases himself initially on the fact that Our Lord practised obedience during his hidden life, before undertaking his apostolic mission. He deduces from this that it is necessary for all those who exercise a similar ministry. Such thinking is in keeping with the spirit of the 17th century French school of spirituality.

The Gospel of the day speaks of "the finding of the child Jesus in the temple" (Lk 2,40f). De La Salle picks out only one verse from the account: "They [the parents] brought him back with them to Nazareth, where he lived in submission to them", and he adds: "This is all the Gospel tells us regarding his life at Nazareth up to the time he went forth to announce the Kingdom of God. What an admirable lesson [...] It was by submission and obedience that Jesus prepared himself for the great work of man's redemption and the salvation of souls".

In MD 7,2, De La Salle stresses the fact that the virtue of obedience is necessary when founding a community. He backs up his statement with quotations from a number of saints. Bonaventure: "Obedience is the very foundation of a community"; Teresa: "A community cannot continue without obedience, and does not even deserve the name community if this virtue is not observed". He even appeals to reason: "Reason itself teaches us the necessity of obedience in a religious society, for it is this virtue which establishes order, and maintains union, peace and tranquillity among the members". He concludes by quoting Mk 3,25: "If a household is at war with itself, that household cannot stand firm". There are elements here which recall *Le parfait inferieur* by Modeste de St Amable.¹

If this virtue is necessary for those who wish to imitate Jesus and enable a community to exist, it is just as necessary "for the sanctification and salvation of those who are in it".

In the third point, the Founder bases himself again on the holy writers of the past: St Thomas Aquinas, St Laurence Justinian, St Bernard, St Vincent Ferrier, Pope St Gregory and concludes: "Since, then, we cannot be saved without the grace of state, and since for persons in religion this grace is obedience, every effort must be made to possess this virtue in all its perfection".

The reader is then led to ask himself whether obedience was the "primary aim" he had "for coming to this community". The conclusion is clear: "Hence you should apply to yourself these words of Pope St Gregory, in his Dialogues, that the first and principal virtue we make profession of is obedience, for this is the source of all others, and the means of your sanctification".

One might be justified in thinking that this was an invitation to make the vow of obedience. We know that, in 1686, De La Salle was surrounded by Brothers who were very enthusiastic about making vows and who were urging their Founder to let them do so. Finally only the vow of obedience was taken, and the prudence this showed was considered inspired by the biographers.

The Founder affirms: "Obedience should be the distinctive characteristic of persons living in community, distinguishing them from people in the world who enjoy their full liberty" (MD 7,3).

2.2.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF OBEDIENCE

In MD 7, we find the following statements:

- "Jesus Christ [...] wishes you to be perfect in this virtue of obedience" (MD 7,1).
- "Obedience is the very foundation of community" (MD 7,2).
- "This grace [of state] for each of you is the grace of obedience" (MD 7,3).
- "Obedience should be the distinctive characteristic of persons living in community" (MD 7,3).

Virtue, grace and characteristic are the three attributes given to obedience as practised by the individual. Where religious communities and societies are concerned, obedience is a "foundation" and a "virtue".

2.3. MD 8 to 15 and 57

De La Salle takes obedience as the subject of his meditations for the Sundays after Epiphany up to, but not including, Lent. After MD 7 which is the first of the series, MD 8 to MD 15 concentrate on the conditions or qualities of the virtue of obedience and explain how it should be practised. We include in our reflection the meditation for the 4th Sunday after Pentecost (MD 57), as it deals with the same material, based, in this instance, on the disciples' reaction to the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5,5).

MD 8: Exactness. Doing everything exactly in the way and at the time indicated and excluding personal preference: "For God requires this thing which is commanded you to be done at a fixed time, and not at your convenience" (MD 8,3).

MD 9: With faith. Making one's obedience an act of religion, for "those who obey their Superior through the conviction that it is God himself they honour in the person of the Superior, thereby raise their obedience to the status of an act of religion" (MD 9,1).

MD 10: Fidelity in temptation. Fidelity to one's vocation depends on praying for the grace to learn how to obey, despite temptations and difficulties regarding the person giving the orders or the thing commanded: "We must be convinced that it is God's will we accomplish in obeying [...] a slavery of love, not to men, but to God" (MD 10,3).

MD 11: Excellence of obedience. Having "more esteem for obedience which makes an action good than for the action itself (MD 11,2), because without obedience a good action has merely a superficial quality. Obedience, on the other hand "rectifies everything" (MD 11,3).

MD 12: Fruits of obedience. "Actions performed through obedience become elevated in character for [...] they have God for their object, since it is God we obey in accomplishing them" (MD 12,1). All graces come to us through obedience and "you will love your state and possess its spirit only in so far as you are faithful to obedience" (MD 12,3).

MD 13: Needs to be practised. "How much to be pitied are those religious whose Superiors give them few, if any, opportunities of practising this virtue" (MD 13,3).

MD 14: Weak-willed religious. "Prepare your heart so that your Superior may command you at all times with the fullest confidence" (MD 14,1).

MD 15: True obedience. "What is most sacred in religion, namely, the execution of the will of God. [...] Obedience to be perfect must be blind" (MD 15,3).

MD 57: The success of obedience. "Such is the fruit of obedience. It draws down the blessings of God so abundantly on what we do that we obtain all we wish" (MD 57,2).

2.4. Teaching adapted to the Brothers

Nowadays, these texts may seem to be full of out-moded rhetoric and lack a certain degree of unity on account of the borrowed material that is included in them. All the same, it is clear that they are rooted in the experience of the Founder who composed them, as well as in the daily lives of the Brothers.

"On entering this religious house, our first aim should have been to obey" (MD 7,2), the writer reminds his readers, and states at the same time a kind of fundamental truth.

These meditations enable us to catch a glimpse of classroom practice and how teachers could fail in obedience: "Thus for instance if you are told to do a certain thing with a specified instrument, and you use another which you consider more appropriate; or again, if instead of using the signal in class, as you are held to do, you prefer to use your voice, thinking it easier" (MD 8,2).

The same can be said of regular observance: "You delay in ringing for an exercise, or if you go to an exercise after it has commenced" (MD 8,3).

Or relations with the Brother Director: "In order to be better penetrated with them, often adore God in the person of those who command you" (MD 9,2). See also "You will honour God in your Superior" (CL 25,66 = RC 16,8). All the examples given are rooted in the daily experience of the Brothers.²

2.5. Texts full of allusions

Another question springs to mind also: do the examples given provide us with a sketch of the kind of Brothers who would have existed at the time? "Showing no inclination for one thing more than for another" (MD 8,1). "You rise earlier than is prescribed" (MD 8,3).

"Is it really God that you obey hidden under the form of a man" (MD 9,1). "Is a mere sign or a word from your Superior sufficient?" (MD 9,2). "Do you

ever allege any reasons to be excused? [...] If you are silent exteriorly, is not your mind occupied with the consideration of what you esteem to be better, more suited to be followed, than what is required by the Superior?" (MD 9,3).

"If the command itself is difficult of execution, God must give you the power to carry it into effect. [...] To obey only in those things which are agreeable to our taste, is to follow our own will rather than God's" (MD 10,3).

To all appearances, they [the actions of the religious] are virtuous, but in truth [...] they are entirely disagreeable to God" (MD 11,1). "Hence, what constitutes the merit of a person living in a religious community is not the quality of the actions he performs, but the excellence of the obedience with which he performs them" (MD 11,3).

"What is done through obedience [...] though often this may appear to be of slight importance..." (MD 12,1). "For why do men fall away? Is it not because they cease to love their Rule?" (MD 12,3).

"They are content to follow the ordinary custom of the community, acquitting themselves only exteriorly and very imperfectly of their duty" (MD 13,2). "When such religious are commanded something they did not anticipate, they cannot make up their minds to obey" (MD 13,2). "Superiors [...] not exercising them in the virtue of obedience" (MD 13,3).

"Such as have merely a desire to obey" (MD 14,1). They are "prepared to do what they are told provided it gives them no trial or trouble" (MD 14,2). "At the least repugnance..." (MD 14,3).

"Self-willed religious [...] they do nothing but ex-

amine the orders given" (MD 15,1) or "who give reasons [...] for being dispensed" (MD 15,2) "attempt to prove to their Superiors that they are wrong" (MD 15,3).

All the cases mentioned must have involved real persons and situations and were not imagined. Through them we catch a glimpse of the life and mentality of the Brothers of the 17th century.

Meditations 13 to 15 seem rather negative in their outlook. The Founder describes in them persons who lack obedience. These texts are clearly shorter than the preceding six and are different in tone, for reasons we do not know.

2.6. Importance of obedience

It is clear from what we have seen that De La Salle attached much importance to obedience. It confirms also the central position of the axiom in the author's thinking on which this importance is founded: the Superior takes the place of God.

This explains both the excellence of obedience as a means of attaining eternal salvation and the merit attached to it. It is the source of grace which gives actions a value that transcends their immediate worth, so much so, that more value should be attached to obedience than to the action itself.

This virtue is such that it makes us bear abundant fruit and procures all blessings for us and perfection and sanctification. It is "the mother and support of all the other virtues" (MD 12,2). There is a need, therefore, for Superiors to make their Brothers practise obedience, and for the Brothers to want to be given the occasion and to ask their Superiors to provide it.

3. OBEDIENCE AS PORTRAYED IN THE "COLLECTION"

3.1. Summary of use of terms

In the *Collection* — which is, as we know, a series of unconnected treatises — the word obedience occurs 43 times in the following treatises:

- p. 34 Articles on which the Brothers should examine themselves, Art. VIII
- p. 40 The nine qualities of obedience
- p. 64 Collection of topics on which the Brothers will speak during recreations, Art. XIV
- p. 68 *Idem*, Art. XXVI
- p. 87 Explanation of the spirit of the Institute

p. 107 On the means to become interior

p. 156 On the principal virtues.

The term to obey occurs 28 times:

p. 3 The obligation of the vows of the Brothers...

P. 5 Ten commandments that the Brothers...

p. 103 Extracts from Holy Scripture

3.2. In "The obligation of the vows"

In this treatise we read the following: "The vows oblige the Brothers [...] 4. To obey, in the first place, the superior of the society who has been chosen, and

the one or ones who will be chosen subsequently; in the second place, specific directors, who have been or who subsequently will be appointed by the superior of the society; in the third place, the body of this society, whether superiors or not, assembled in its name. One is obliged to obey all the persons mentioned above, under pain of mortal sin, every time they command in virtue of the vow" (CL 15,3 = R 2,4).

This legally phrased text needs little comment. The longer treatise on the virtue seems to have served a more practical purpose and alludes to a wide variety of cases probably taken from the Founder's personal experience.

3.3. In "The nine qualities of obedience"

One of the treatises included in the *Collection* is entitled "The nine qualities of obedience". It opens with the following words: "Obedience being the principal and most necessary virtue for religious or for persons who live in community, it is important for those who [...] wish to practise this virtue [...] to know in what it consists and which qualities should characterise it" (CL 15,40 = R 9,1,1).

There follows a definition: "Obedience is a virtue by which one submits one's will and judgment to a person seen as taking the place of God" (CL 15,41 = R 9,1,1). It should be noted that obedience requires the submission of both will and judgment.

The nine qualities of obedience, some of which are repeated, then follow:

Obedience must be:

1. Christian and religious
2. universal
3. indifferent
4. exact and complete
5. prompt
6. blind
7. simple
8. humble and respectful
9. cordial and affectionate

(according to CL 15,41 = R 9,1,2).

De La Salle himself suggested these 9 headings should be grouped together: "The first of these qualities indicates the motive: [...] to obey, as if the person were God, through a spirit of religion" (CL 15,41f = R 9,1,3f). We find the same teaching in MD 9.

"The following three concern primarily the person one obeys and the things in which one obeys" (*id.*).

MD 8, 9, 10 & 11 speak in the same vein.

"The fifth indicates the exact time when one must obey: [...] immediately" (*id.*, see MD 8 & 9).

"The last four indicate the manner in which we should obey. [...] Obedience must be blind, [...] not trying to discover why, [...] joyful, [...] however difficult it may be" (*id.*, see MD 9, 14 & 15).

Several of the adjectives used in the MD — exact, prompt, punctual, religious, blind, humble, simple — can be found also in the *Collection*. In this latter work, however, the material is presented in a more concise form, as if intended as a list to be used during an examination of conscience or an evaluation. Also the words "director" or "Brother Director" occur here, while their use in the MD is rare.

After defining each quality briefly, the author indicates some faults opposed to it. Sometimes he quotes concrete examples as he does in the MD.

"The Brother Director, for example, commands that something should be cut with scissors, but instead a knife is used; or that a bad instrument be used to do something, and instead a good one is used" (CL 15,48 = R 9,2,4). This is reflected in MD 8,2: "If you are told to do a certain thing with a specified instrument, and you use another which you consider more appropriate". The tone of the treatise is calm: there are none of the exhortations or exclamations we find in the meditations and which, in our days, can make their reading difficult, although in the Founder's day, this approach was quite normal.

3.4. In "The principal virtues...": A Christocentric spirituality

In the last but one treatise of the *Collection* entitled: "On the principal virtues which the Brothers must ensure they practise" (CL 15,154f = R 15,2), the tone is different and more spiritual.

Obedience is the second virtue to be treated, coming after faith. De La Salle first recalls the necessity for obedience, "essential for your state", and then invites the Brother to contemplate Jesus Christ, his model. He bases his thinking on three quotations from the New Testament: "Adore often the simple and exact obedience of Jesus Christ", he writes, before quoting He 10,5-7: "I come to do your will, O my God". He then adds: "Take the obedience of Jesus Christ as a model for your own" (Ph 2,8) and "In everything, submit your will and judgment, [...] whatever trouble

or difficulty you have in obeying, bearing in mind what St Paul said, that you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (He 12,4).

The treatise ends with an appeal to faith, without which obedience "would not be a Christian virtue",

and the statement of a theological principle helpful for the everyday life of the reader: "'It is God alone that you must obey in the person of your superiors [...] because it is to God alone [...] that a creature owes submission" (CL 15,158 = R 15,2,5).

4. OBEDIENCE AS PORTRAYED IN THE "COMMON RULES"

4.1. The chapter "On obedience"

One of the chapters of the *Common Rules* (RC) is entitled "On Obedience". The words "obedience" and "to obey" occur only once. The chapter is characterised by numerous detailed prescriptions:

"2. They shall be prompt to leave everything at the first sound of the bell or at the first sign from Br Director.

3. They shall not enter any room [...] without permission. They shall not leave the house nor the room where the Brothers are without permission. [...]

4. They shall not read any book [...] without permission" (CL 25,73f; 1705 text).

However, from the very first article, the Founder was careful to indicate the spiritual dimension of obedience: "The Brothers will be careful and will ensure that they obey only with views and sentiments of faith" (RC20.1).

Moreover, the chapter comes to an end with an article intended to close any loopholes in the matter, but which at the same time expresses clearly the motives of faith mentioned in article 1: "They will not do anything without permission, however small and however unimportant the thing may appear, so as to be sure that they are doing God's will in everything".

4.2. Dependence and permission

The word "permission" occurs 6 times in the chapter "On Obedience". In the Lasallian corpus it occurs

91 times. Strangely enough, in the meditations on obedience it is not used at all. It occurs 22 times in the *Common Rules* as a whole. Permission implies a relationship of dependence regulated by obedience.

For the Brothers, then, asking for explicit permission from the superior is the usual means of government in their Institute. It is associated with a permanent spiritual attitude: "You must show on all occasions your utter dependence on God" (MD 6,3).

Asking permission, a sign of dependence, is referred to by allusion in a number of the Founder's meditations: "We belong to Christ [...] only in so far as we are attached to our Superiors, and that we act dependently on them, since, according to St Paul, the obedience we show to our Superiors is the obedience we owe to Christ" (MD 72,2 quoting Eph 6,5 loosely).

"Have you [...] shown as much dependence upon your Superiors as upon God?" (MF 91,1). This question, in the first point of the meditation for December 30th, is part of a self-examination De La Salle asks each Brother to make to discover God's will in his regard. It returns to the spiritual obligations mentioned in MD 7 to 15 (cf. 2.2. & 2.3. above). We see that, even if De La Salle does not explain obedience at length in the chapter devoted to it in the *Rules*, the question quoted above shows that the Founder had given his disciples some solid spiritual teaching about this virtue.

5. THE MEANING OF LASALLIAN OBEDIENCE

5.1. Biblical references

Biblical allusions or quotations referring explicitly to obedience are not numerous in the Founder's writings. In all they number 18, and 14 of these are from the New Testament.

They express three main ideas: 1. The passages from the Gospel in which Jesus exhorts those that wish to follow him to renounce eve-

rything. This is ascetic obedience, in the tradition of the "Following of Christ"³ (MD 7,3 quoting Mk 8,34).

2. The examples of obedience given by biblical figures, like the servants to whom Jesus says: "Fill these waterpots" (Jn 2,4 quoted by MD 8,3).

3. Pauline texts and the Letter to the Hebrews offer us the model of the Son obeying his Father. "Take the obedience of Jesus Christ as a model for your own

[...] considering [...] that he was obedient even until death, the death of the cross" (CL 15,157 = R 15,2,3 quoting Ph 2,8).

We can say that the biblical doctrine expressed here is traditional in the consecrated life and constitutes its essence. In this way, De La Salle places the detailed prescriptions of the *Rules* and *Collection* in the context of the mystery of salvation.

5.2. MD 6: Conforming oneself to the will of God

For the Sunday preceding the Epiphany, De La Salle proposes a meditation entitled: "The example of Jesus living retired and hidden in Egypt teaches us to love a hidden life" (MD 6). He does not advocate in it the physical withdrawal from the world, but a distancing of oneself from its values. He uses this as a jumping off point for speaking about obedience without hardly using the word. We can judge for ourselves.

First point:

"Joseph, having been warned by an angel to take the Child Jesus into Egypt, [...] departed at once. [...] he would not have left the land [...] had it not been for the command of God".

"God has placed us in a holy retreat [...] If we leave this sanctuary, it must be only because God so wills it [...] to go and preserve the life of Christ in the hearts of those whom we have to instruct".

Second point:

"In Egypt [...] an obscure and unknown existence was what pleased the Holy Family best, and this is what the

Eternal Father had destined for Jesus till the moment when he would begin to preach the Gospel and convert souls, which was the primary object of his coming". "Your only thought should be to acquit yourself of your ministry... [...] You will be in the world merely as passers-by, occupied solely in the work of God".

Third point:

"Immediately after the death of Herod, an angel told St Joseph to return to Judea. [...] This warning was enough. So prompt was he in the accomplishment of God's behest that he arose immediately and, taking with him the Mother and Child, he set out in all haste. What admirable obedience on the part of St Joseph to the command of God!".

"The same God who called you to this occupation now requires your return. Is any other consideration necessary? You must show on all occasions your utter dependence on God, and your willingness to go wherever he requires at the very first sign".

Unlike in the meditations proposed for the Sundays that follow, the stress here is not on the destruction of one's own will, but on a more direct relationship with God, and on the resolution to conform oneself to his will. It is from this point of view, we believe, that all the teachings of the Founder on obedience in the other meditations and in the *Collection*⁴ ought to be understood.

The behaviour of John Baptist de La Salle throws light on his teaching on obedience. How does he see it primarily: a means of government or of sanctification?⁵ Does the need for it result from the social need for order and efficiency, or is it rooted in a vision of man enlightened by the Christian faith?⁶

6. THE PRACTICE OF THE FOUNDER

6.1. Relations with his spiritual directors

The first biographers insist a lot on De La Salle's obedience, either during his formation at the seminary of St Sulpice in Paris, or especially later to his spiritual directors. It was they who guided him in all his important decisions such as taking charge a parish, lodging the teachers in his own house, giving up his canonry, giving away his inheritance, the decision whether to endow his schools, his departure for Paris...

When he was convinced that God wanted something of him, he gave himself no rest till he had convinced his spiritual director of God's will, but he would not act without his director's agreement.

6.2. Relations with the "body" of the Institute

De La Salle's relations with his Brothers differed according as they were with the Brothers as a whole, as a body, or with individual Brothers.

When it is the "society", "community" or "institute" that is involved, even if he feels it is his mission to establish it, his concern for acting "together and by association" leads him to make the Brothers share even in the smallest decisions. Blain reports him as saying: "The laws will seem acceptable to you because you yourselves will have created them" (CL 7,232). He refuses to make final decisions and ensures that it is the Brothers who decide, even when

drawing up the *Rules* or composing the *Conduct of Schools*.

In 1694, the Founder and his first 12 associates introduced the expression "the body of the society" into the formula of vows. They committed themselves to obeying "both the body of this society and its superiors" (CL 10,116 = EP 2,0,3). At a later date, the *Collection* indicated the obligations of the vows of the Brothers (cf. 3.2. above).

6.3. Relations with Brother superiors

De La Salle wanted the future Institute to have a Brother at its head. After describing the election of Brother Henri L'Heureux as Superior of the first community in Rheims, De La Salle's biographer, Blain, goes on to say: "M. de La Salle was the first to show him marks of respect, submission and dependence. [...] He sought only to know and accomplish the will of the master he had given himself. [...] How surprised were those who witnessed how often he would ask permission" (CL 7,264f). His attitude was identical after the election of Brother Barthelemy as Superior General in 1717.

6.4. When acting as Superior

When he became superior himself, he showed by his actions and words the need for obedience. He wrote in the *Rule of the Brother Director*:

"His first concern regarding the Brothers will be to inspire and maintain in them a true spirit of faith, and to make them consider doing the will of God in all things as the rule of all their conduct".

"He will be so careful to maintain obedience in all the Brothers that a single moment's delay in doing what has been commanded, a single word of objection, the slightest rebuff, the smallest thing done without permission, will always be looked upon by him as a fault which must be promptly remedied" (CL 25,157).

The Founder's letters to the Brothers reveal the importance he attached to obedience. A few examples will be sufficient to show this. He writes to Br Denis on August 1st 1708:

"My very dear Brother, to practise real obedience you must be ready to obey all superiors. The difficulty you find in this arises from the fact that you do not see God in them" (LA 12,9).

Two examples from letters to Br Hubert. He was 19 years old when the Founder wrote to him in 1702:

"My very dear Brother, you must allow yourself to be led as a child of obedience who has no other aim than to obey and in doing so carry out God's will. Take great care never to use such terms as "I want" or "I won't" or "I must". These are expressions and ways of speaking that are to be held in abhorrence. They cannot but keep back the graces that God offers to those who have no other will but his" (LA 33,2f).

Six years later, Br Hubert was Director of Guise when the Founder wrote to him:

"You must be more careful to correct the Brothers' faults. Don't let the Brothers argue or answer back when you give them directives. Indeed, you must test their obedience and see that they practise it faithfully" (LA 36,14f).

The Founder's letters to Brother Mathias, with his mercurial temperament, are full of exhortations and advice. On March 23rd 1708 he wrote to him:

"Take care not to let yourself be carried away by impatience in class [...] It is wrong to let yourself be carried away by every idea that comes into your head, for many such thoughts are wrong. Let yourself be guided by obedience and you will see that God will bless you" (LA 47,12f).

In a letter to Br Robert, dated May 21st 1708, the Founder wrote:

"Be faithful, moreover, in practising obedience, for it is a virtue you should have very much at heart; it is the principal one you should practise in community" (LA 55,3).

For all their down-to-earth character, these and other letters reveal De La Salle's insistence on the spiritual life of the Brothers who wrote to him regularly to give an account of their conduct.

The letters reveal also the Founder's great solicitude for his Brothers and his desire to encourage them. We see the extent to which obedience, which calls for submission in an inferior, makes demands on the willingness to be of service and on the forgetfulness of self of the person in authority.

7. OBEDIENCE ACCORDING TO THE RULE BETWEEN 1718 AND 1986

7.1. From the Bull of Approbation to 1947

When Pope Benedict XIII approved the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by the Bull *In apostolicae dignitatis solio*, the 1725 General Chapter revised the *Rules* in order to bring them into line with the Bull. As a consequence, article 1 of the chapter "On Obedience" now began with the words: "The Brothers will apply themselves with great care and in all things to become perfectly obedient 1. TO OUR HOLY FATHER THE POPE AND TO ALL THE DECISIONS OF THE CHURCH. 2. TO THEIR SUPERIORS..." (additions emphasised by us).

Also, two chapters were added to the *Rules*. The first, entitled "On the Vows", indicated criteria and procedures for admission. The other, "The Obligations of the Vows", explained in detail the commitment made by the Brothers when they pronounced their vows. It followed almost exactly the treatise published by the Founder with the same title in the *Collection* in 1717.⁷

If we read the *Rules* approved by the Holy See some two centuries later in 1947, we see that while things in it are fundamentally the same, in practice they are different.

They are different in their application, shown by additions which reflect a degree of evolution in the times and in the teaching profession: "Their reading materials and their religious and secular studies will be subject to the control of obedience..."

They are the same because the spiritual teachings have not changed, and article 1 has returned to the form it had before the Bull, which is less ponderous syntactically (cf. 4.1. above). Obedience to the Pope is included in the chapter "The obligations of the Vows". The final article remains the same also: "They will not do anything without permission [...] so as to be sure of doing God's will in all things".

7.2. Following Vatican II

Vatican II called upon religious congregations to begin a process of renewal and adaptation. Shortly afterwards, the Brothers held their 39th General Chapter, one of whose tasks was to rewrite all the legislative documents of the Congregation. The new *Rules* published at the end of 1967 included a chapter enti-

tled "Obedience". Its tone was quite different from the parallel text in the 1946 *Rules*.

It opens with a purely spiritual definition: "Obedience is communion with the Spirit who identifies the will of the Brother with that of Christ". The area where this communion can be found is the Church, the body of the Institute, the Superiors, the community, everyday events. The personal consequence for the Brother must be the surrender of his freedom to God in order to become available for his service (7a).

Three articles (7b-d) then indicate "the places where the Spirit normally manifests himself (7b). The greatest emphasis is put on the community presided over by the Brother Director. The next two articles (7e-f) refer to the ascetic aspect of obedience which unites the Brothers "to the Mystery of Christ who became obedient unto death and whom God exalted" (7f quoting Ph 2,8).

The second part of the chapter explains the extent of the obligations of the vow of obedience, then exhorts the Brothers to listen to one another in community. Nothing is said regarding obedience to the upper ranks, the body of the society or major superiors, except the following: "The respective roles of the various superiors are described in the Book of Government" (7,6).

The idea of "the will of God" which was the essential element in the chapter "On Obedience" in the old *Rules* in the period 1725-1946 is still present (7d), but greater emphasis is given to conformity to the will of Christ (7a). The humanity of "Christ who was obedient unto death" is stressed. The Brother Director is especially singled out: "Following the example of Christ, whom he represents, he endeavours to be the servant of the community" (7c).

Another novelty is the highlighting of the role of the Holy Spirit who reveals God's plans through human mediators whom the Brother obeys. The principal area of "the movement of the Spirit" is the community, defined as a forum for debate. Nothing is said of other levels of discernment in faith existing in the Institute.

These new points which are stressed — conformity to Christ and docility to the Spirit — are not missing, of course, from the spiritual teachings of St John Baptist de La Salle.⁸

7.3. Today

After 20 years, the 1967 *ad experimentum* text was evaluated, and at the 1986 general Chapter, the definitive text was drawn up. This text was approved by the Holy See on January 26th 1987. The new *Rule* (in the singular) speaks of obedience in articles 36 to 38 of chapter 3 which is devoted to "The Consecrated Life".

Article 36 deals with the material of articles 7a and 7f of the 1967 Rule, that is, the definition of obedience. The 1986 Rule speaks of "evangelical obedience" and refers to the Spirit and the obedience of Christ.

Article 37, in its first two paragraphs, describes the role of the community and of the Brother Director in the exercise of this virtue (cf. 7b in the 1967 *Rules*). A third paragraph takes up again the reference to ascetic obedience in the 1967 *Rules* (7e), but adds something new: "The Brothers make known their problems to their superiors" becomes "The Brothers make known their problems to the community and to the superiors".

Article 38 deals with the vow of obedience in terms almost identical to those used in 1967 (7,1-2). In ac-

cordance with the *Code of Canon Law*, obedience to the Pope "in virtue of the vow" is reinstated.

The new text is more succinct than the one it replaces. The material of articles 7c and 7d of 1967 is left out, in particular the description of obedience in community, subject to the authority of a Director who represents Christ (7c).

On the other hand, there is the second paragraph of article 36 which is almost entirely new: "Inspired by the teaching and example of the Founder, who submitted himself to the 'Body of the Society', the Brothers live out their obedience by their availability within a community committed to accomplishing the mission of the Institute".

If the reference to "the will of God", unchanged from 1705 to 1967, has disappeared, obedience is shown in the context of "the mission of the institute" and rooted in the founding act of John Baptist de La Salle.

The purpose of the obedience of the Brothers is clearly described as being the edification of a community of evangelical life, and the promotion of apostolic work for the education of youth.

8. CONCLUSION: OBEDIENCE AND LOVE

In conclusion, let us examine the meditation proposed by St John Baptist de La Salle for Tuesday in Holy Week and entitled "Jesus Christ abandoned to suffering and death". It invites the Brothers to contemplate the Lord at a time when, rejected by the Jews, he knows that his time has almost come. With sober eloquence and restrained emotion, De La Salle concentrates on "the dispositions of Jesus Christ conformable to the designs which God had over him" (MD 24,1). "Strive to imitate the example of Our Lord by never acting on your own accord, but always allowing yourself to be ruled and governed by your Superiors in all you have to do" (MD 24,3).

"It is thus that the Son of God abandoned himself to the will of his Father. [...] As he declares [...] it is the will of him who sent me, not my own will, that I have come down from heaven to do. O amiable abandonment of the human will of Jesus, submissive in all to the divine, and directed [...] by the decisions of the Eternal Father" (MD 24,3).

This is not the *honnête homme* of the 17th century or the doctor in theology speaking here: it is a person in love with Jesus who wishes to be like him even in his sufferings, if this proves necessary.

The inspiration for this meditation is not the same as that of the meditations devoted specifically to obedience. Obedience in this meditation is shown in a different light, as the mystical fruit of the author's contemplation of the incarnate Word, the model of all obedience.

A different tone can be discerned in the meditation for the vigil of Pentecost: "The second requisite for receiving the Holy Ghost is that we should keep the commandments of God and study to do his will in all things. According to our Lord's words, the truth-giving Spirit [...] can take complacency only in souls which strive always to do what God desires [...] we must not expect to receive this Holy Spirit unless we are resolved to accomplish the divine good pleasure

in all things. Doubtless you had no other reason for leaving the world than to give yourself entirely to God, and to possess abundantly his Holy Spirit. You must not count on enjoying this advantage, however, unless you punctually carry out all that you know to be the will of God. Hence be very careful to observe your Rule strictly" (MD 42,2).

The Holy Founder urged his disciples to practise ascetic obedience, proposing serenely one goal only: the reception of the Holy Spirit. By doing this he puts obedience into the right context, "as a second requisite", which must not be separated from the first which is "to love God and to give oneself entirely to him" (MD42,1).

¹ See bibliography, vol. I, p. 156

² It is strange that there are no references to the "Brother Director" in the meditations analysed. Perhaps this means that the texts were not initially written for the Brothers, or that De La Salle borrowed the terms from a predecessor as yet unidentified.

³ See the article "Imitation of Christ" by A. BOTANA, in the present volume.

⁴ See SAUVAGE & CAMPOS, *Annoncer...* p. 174f.

⁵ Or MD 7,1 contrasted with MD 7,3.

⁶ Or MD 7,2 contrasted with MD 9. See the article "Duty" in the present volume.

⁷ See CL 25,69 and especially note 1.

⁸ We referred to the question of conformity to Christ in 3.4. For docility to the Spirit, see CLEMENT MARCEL, in the bibliography, or very succinctly, our conclusion.

Complementary themes

Abandonment	Director	Imitation of Christ
Brother's dress	Duties of a Christian	Inspiration
Commandments	Duty - Obligation	Religious
Community	Faith (spirit of)	Rule - Regularity
Consecration	Fidelity - Perseverance	Suffering
Conversion	God	Vows
Counsels	Humility	World (Relations with the)

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86. PEACE

Summary

1. Vocabulary
2. The social context of war and violence
3. Peace of soul in trials
4. Peace of soul in prayer
5. Peace and personal discernment
6. Peace and community discernment
7. God at the heart of fraternal peace
8. Peace and fraternal reconciliation
9. Peace in the context of the liturgy
10. Peace as a Messianic theme

1. Vocabulary

The language used by De La Salle as well as the language of the time made little distinction between "peace", "repose", "tranquillity" and "calm". They were not synonymous, but certainly closely related. In the same way "peace of heart", "peace of soul" and "peace of mind" meant more or less the same thing, although on occasion, they could be synonymous or even distinct in meaning. The word "peace" at times had the meaning of "silence". In the 17th century, "Peace!" could mean "Be silent!" (cf. Moliere). It is clear also that "peace" and "order" (regularity) were easily associated.

2. The social context of war and violence

De La Salle says nothing for or against the interminable wars of the kingdom of France of the time. Despite religious troubles, despite the 30 Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession, there is no explicit concern voiced in his writings about the return of peace to his country. Nevertheless, we find him full of praise for St Louis, King of France, because he obtained for his subjects "peace and quiet". He notes also that he undertook the Crusades against the infidel in order to "destroy the empire of the devil

in their land, and erect on its ruins the Kingdom of Jesus Christ" (MF 160,3). The fate of King James II, a contemporary of his, who had to flee from England because of religious persecution, did not inspire any written comments on his part, and is not mentioned in any of his writings.

His journeys to the South of France, where the Camisards were in revolt, did not inspire him to write anything about religious wars, nor did the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a contemporary event, nor the fact he worked for the conversion of the Huguenots, members of the "Supposedly Reformed Religion", whom he met on his travels. Where heretics are mentioned in the *Meditations*, it is more to warn the Brothers not to have any dealings with them' than to urge them to be pastorally even-handed in their regard — not a wide-spread practice in his days.

The very rare allusions to war that are found in his writings do not show a concern for social peace, but are rather of the type: "Sometimes special prayers are said in the Church [...] in times of war to ask God for peace" (CL 22,6 = DC 10,1,3), or in a reference to someone he knows: "Another priest. [...] He was suspended for having gone off to war" (LA 31,14). There is very little written in this connection.

Even the difficult relations with the Jansenists are not treated from an aggressively hostile point of view, and do not really disturb the peace De La Salle sought. It has to be said, however, that he reacted vigorously to all attempts to make him appear as a supporter of the doctrine which Rome had condemned.

Nor is the violence that De La Salle had to suffer from the writing masters, or from certain authorities lacking in understanding, reflected in his writings in the form of acrimony or references to conspiring forces. The only violence he advocates is the violence to be used against the passions opposed to salvation. As he said: "One cannot be virtuous without doing oneself violence" (LA 11,5).

The peace he seeks most of all is that of the soul with God, brought about by war against sin.² It is also peace among people, peace with one's neighbour in the spirit of the Gospel.

3. Peace of soul in trials

The text in which De La Salle seems to bring together his ideas on peace is that of the meditation for Easter Tuesday. He entitles it: "On interior peace and the means to preserve it". Incidentally, the title is typical of De La Salle: whenever he states principles he almost always associates means with them.

The main point the text makes is that "interior peace proceeds from charity". Peace must exist in our relationship with God and because of it. This conviction on the part of De La Salle is based on the words of St Paul: "What will separate us from the love of Christ?" (RM 8,35). In fact, he goes on to say, that only what can make us lose charity and the love of God is capable of destroying peace of soul. Listing the various problems of life — "interior or exterior trials, [...] privation of anything to which we are attached, poor food, humiliating clothes, the danger of losing health or one's life, insults, calumnies, reprimands" — he concludes: "None of these things can make you lose your interior peace if it is a true peace, because none of them can cause you to lose charity" (MD 31,2). He adds: "Among all the misfortunes that may overtake you, you ought always to remain victorious because of the One who has loved you, Jesus Christ. For neither death nor life, nor any creature can ever separate you from the charity of God, which unites you to Jesus Christ, Our Lord" (MD 31,3 quoting Rm 8,35). Persecutions, then, cannot make us lose peace,

because "we must, indeed, expect to be ill-treated in this world after having worked all our life for God, and this will enable us to find and possess him, as also that holy peace within us" (MF 95,3).

From this point of view, De La Salle can say that, to have peace, it is necessary to become "more fixedly [...] and more truly attached to God", otherwise the soul can easily lose peace, if it is only apparent. But when a person lives the new life of one risen with Christ, then "the soul feels peace within it" (MD 31,1). When it remains subject to the movement of the Holy Spirit, it can be certain of "enjoying always true peace and tranquillity of heart" (CL 17,213 = I 3,36,2).

4. Peace of soul in prayer

As a great expert on prayer, both in his own life and in his teaching, De La Salle did not restrict himself to advocating vocal prayer, however important it may be:³ he invited especially souls greatly attached to God to practise prayer of the heart.⁴ This type of prayer, however, when it is badly understood, can lead to all kinds of excesses which some of its adepts in the reign of Louis XIV were unable to avoid. There was Molinos and his followers, one of whom was the famous Jeanne Guyon with her "A short and easy way to make mental prayer", as well as Quietism.⁵ Without going into any details here, we can note the book by Fr André Rayez which concludes there was no trace of Quietism in De La Salle, either in his life or in his works.⁵ If De La Salle recommends prayer of the heart, if he recommends repose and great peace in prayer, he does so while remaining thoroughly orthodox.⁷

5. Peace and personal discernment

Personal discernment requires serenity, honesty in judging one's behaviour, a spirit of renewal, an attachment to the Rule and the laying aside of anxiety born of human ambition. In other words, what is needed is a view of faith and a trusting self-abandonment to the divine will. One must preserve peace in the midst of the uncertainties of one's vocation and discern the will of God: "It seems to me [...] that you ought not to spend so much time on thoughts that come into your head about your vocation" (LA 10,1). If interior peace is disturbed by worries, one must discern the reasons for this with one's Director (LA 33,4) or simply calm one's agitation: "You allow yourself to get too upset and that does you a lot of harm" (LA

43,11). He is happy when his Brothers enjoy peace: "I am very happy you have great peace of mind" (LI 53,1).

De La Salle himself is able to preserve his peace of mind in spite of upsets and offensive words: "Your letters [...] have sometimes been [...] very offensive. [...] I have tried, however, not to take offence" (LA 48,6-7). De La Salle shows that he preserves peace of mind in his relations with others by his attention to small details. He is embarrassed for leaving without saying goodbye to a Brother (after sending for him several times!) (LC 75,6).

De La Salle also seeks to maintain peace in communities by discernment, in which a major part is played by respect for other people's words, gestures and ideas. What he considers to be most important is seeing Jesus present in one's fellow Brothers. "They will not give to any of their Brothers any sign of particular affection through respect for Our Lord living in them" (RC 13,1). During recreation, the Brothers will use their discernment not to disturb the peaceful atmosphere by making fun of others, backbiting and indulging in pointless arguments (RC 6).

6. Peace and community discernment

In the days of De La Salle, there were few structures that could help the Brothers in their community discernment. There were, however, certain exercises which needed to be made with peace of mind and serenity, and which were of a nature also to produce peace of mind. For example, the so-called "advertisement of defects", when done properly, had this effect. Spiritual conferences, which subsequently were discussed during recreation, were in their way an attempt to achieve peace in community through a sort of examination of conscience or sharing of faith. Even the interview with the Director contributed, and continues to do so, to community discernment, encouraging, as it does, peace and cooperation. Obedience supported by regularity, in its turn, helps to maintain "order, union, peace and tranquillity" (MD 7,2; cf. CL 15,159 = R 15,3,1). De La Salle sees obedience as "the fruit of charity and the pure love of God". It is not surprising, then, that those who obey "enjoy interior peace, consolation and joy which cannot be expressed" (MD 12,1). One could say that these were factors which helped.

7. God at the heart of fraternal peace

Peace should not be considered as a purely superficial aim, something like "peace in a cemetery", as the saying goes, but rather as a sign of our attachment to Jesus Christ and to his life in us: "There can be neither union nor peace where God does not reside" (MD 77,2).

One could say that what is affirmed here is the law of reciprocity. Where God is, there is peace: where there is peace, there is God. *Ubi caritas Deus ibi est*. De La Salle writes: "To be at peace with God we must be at peace with men" (CL 17,40 = I 1, 6, 53). We find another form of reciprocity in the fact that mutual support is a necessary condition for peace. As De La Salle points out in a commentary on a text from St Paul: "Bear the burden of one another's failings. [...] Each one has his burden, but ordinarily it is not the one who has it who feels its weight. Rather is it those with whom he lives who have to support it. If we wish to live in peace and harmony, we must mutually bear one another's burdens" (MF 91,2). It is mutual acceptance that maintains union — that precious jewel — in a community. We have mentioned a number of community structures which can help discernment to take place with peace of mind and with a view to peace and harmony. We should mention also the occasions when fraternal reconciliation occurs, an event which contributes so much to peace and charity.

8. Peace and fraternal reconciliation

For De La Salle, Maundy Thursday did not mean only the feast of the Eucharist: it was also the day of fraternal love and forgiveness. He found inspiration for the ceremony the Brothers followed in chapters 13-17 of St John's Gospel and, more specifically, in the washing of the feet. The exercise began with the reading of the chapters from St John. There followed a commentary by the Director in the form of a dialogue. Then all the Brothers asked one another's pardon for all the wrongs they may have done to one another during the course of the year.

9. Peace in the context of the liturgy

Peace is a notion that can be found also in the context of the liturgy. There is no need to dwell on prayers which mention or ask for the peace promised by Christ.

However, it might be useful to say a few words about what De La Salle and the liturgical experts of his day called the *instrument of peace*.

It consists of a pious representation, normally about the size of a hand. It could be made of ivory, silver or some other material, and vary in the degree to which it was embellished, carved, etc. Some very fine examples of these objects can be seen in museums such as, for example, the one at Monte Cassino. From the Middle Ages onward, kissing the instrument of peace replaced the kiss of peace given by the priest to the deacon and then exchanged by the faithful. A cleric would carry this instrument around the church, asking each member of the congregation to kiss it as a sign that he wished to share in the peace.⁸

10. Peace as a Messianic theme

Apart from speaking of peace on a personal or community level, a somewhat restricted field, De La Salle had also a much broader vision of peace: peace in a Messianic context.

He stressed the peace which Jesus Christ had brought us through the mystery of the incarnation and redemption: "Jesus tells us himself in the Gospel that he came into this world only to give us life and to give it to us with greater abundance. It is through him and with him, says St Paul, that all things have become reconciled with God. And by the blood he shed on the cross, peace has been given to what is in heaven and to what is on earth" (MF 112,3).

Although he never wrote a systematic treatise on peace, yet, through the various insights he gives in his writings, De La Salle enables us to understand what an important place the pursuit of peace occupies in the lives of Christians and religious. His commentary on the 7th Beatitude seems to summarise his thinking on the matter: "The peacemakers [...] are those who strive to overcome their passions in order to be and to remain at peace with God, with their neighbour and with themselves. They will be called children of God because of the resemblance they will have with him and with Jesus Christ, who always possessed peace and came to bring it to earth" (CL 20,192 = DA 216,2,15).

¹ "Although there may not be any heretics opposed to you at present because there are not any in the places where you teach" (MF 120,2). "By your mission you are required to labour, not against heretics, but against the evil inclinations of your pupils" (MF 161,2).

² "Peace of heart [...] is given only to those who have an extreme horror for sin" (CL 17,177 = I 3,2,2).

³ In his catechism, De La Salle asks the following question: "Who has made known to us the obligation that all people have to pray to God, to ask him for what they need?" He answers: "It was Our Lord Jesus Christ when he said in the Holy Gospel that God will not give us what we need unless we ask him; and that we would obtain all that we asked with faith in prayer" (CL 21,245 = DB 4,1,4).

⁴ De La Salle explains: "Man also has the advantage of being able to pray to God in his heart at all times and in all places" (CL 20,472 = DA 405,1,10). Further on, he speaks of a prayer of the heart "made through silence, by remaining in the presence of God simply with sentiments of respect and adoration, without saying anything or asking God for anything". He then refers to Cassian; "Apparently, this is the method of prayer Cassian refers to in his 9th conference, when he says that sometimes in prayer, the mind

hides from itself in profound silence" (CL 20,473 = DA 405,1,11). Cassian's actual words are: "Nonnunquam vero tanto silentio mens intra secretum profundae taciturnitatis absconditur" (see in the bibliography, Vol. 2, p. 63).

⁵ Our intention is to compare the idea of peace with peaceful repose in the prayer of simple attention advocated by De La Salle in his Method, and in the tradition of numerous spiritual writers down the ages. The Quietists, with their excesses went so far as to reject the prayer of petition, to maintain a passivity which required absolutely no effort on their part, a sort of lack of constraint whose negative effects they put down to God's will working in them. For a general history of Quietism, see POURRAT in the bibliography.

⁶ A. Rayez writes: "Despite the excesses of the Quietists which he knows about and condemns, De La Salle opens the door slightly to contemplation and to the passivity of the mind, using sometimes the vocabulary of the likes of Canfield, Chrysostome de St Lô, Bernières, Durin, Courbon and Boudon" (see *Études lasalliennes*, 1952, pp. 53f and *La Spiritualité d'abandon chez SJBS* in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, N° 121, p. 28). Rayez goes on to say; "There is no sign of Quietism in the writings of the

saint. The Explanation and the Letters are completely orthodox" (idem, p. 32, note 69).

⁷ When recommending peace and repose in prayer, De La Salle does not hesitate, all the same, to reassure one of the persons he directs; "Your present state of prayer, as you describe it to me, is not the dangerous form of idleness you think. Provided you hold onto the thought of God and make progress towards him, why should you be upset. He has no need of all your efforts. Idleness is to be avoided, but at the same time you must not hamper yourself with a great number of acts in prayer. All you need and all God wants of you is that you remain in his presence" (LI 126,10). And the biographer Blain recalls that "in response to an admonishment made to him by an ecclesiastic", who maintained that certain things he had written came close to Quietism, De La Salle, who was "always on guard against any suspect doctrine", removed the following words

from the prayers said by the Brothers: "I vow to you, my God, that even if there were no other life to hope for after this one, I would not stop loving you" (CL 8,222).

We should note, however, that the same idea had already been voiced by St Francis de Sales: "Even if there were no hell to punish the rebels, or heaven to reward the good [...] the love of goodness would lead us to offer total obedience [...] even through a sweet loving violence" (*Treatise on the love of God*, I. 8, c. 2 to the end).

⁸ "The priest [...] kisses [...] an instrument of peace which the deacon offers him, then it is presented to all the members of the congregation individually with the words: Pax Vobis, Peace be with you" (CL 17,39 = I 1,6,52). In more recent times, the Church has gone back to its previous practice. In our own days, the sign of peace is adapted to the local culture, but the message it imparts remains always the same: "May the peace of Christ be with you".

Complementary themes

Conversation

Love - Charity

Union

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87. PIETY

Summary

1. The understanding of piety in 17th century France

1.1. Piety seen as a moral virtue that shows love and reverence for God and holy things. **1.2.** Christian spirituality has always seen piety as both a virtue and a gift of the Holy Spirit, associated often with the idea of devotion.

2. Piety, the teaching and example of De La Salle

De La Salle spoke of piety as 2.1. an attitude of mind and heart in the practice of specific religious actions, 2.2. the quality of a whole life totally given over to the worship and service of God, 2.3. a number of practices known as "exercises of piety", 2.4. a certain kind of printed material: books, hymns, holy pictures.

2.5. De La Salle himself manifested piety in his great respect for the presence of God, his practice of prayer and the other exercises of the religious life, his great reverence for the priesthood, and his complete dedication to the service of others.

1. PIETY IN 17th CENTURY FRANCE

1.1. The meaning of the word

The *Dictionnaire universel françois latin* (Trévoux, 1721) defines piety as a moral virtue which leads us to have a love and respect for God and holy things. The French word *dévotion* is given as a synonym. This is also true of Richelet's dictionary (1680), but those of Furetière (1690) and of the *French Academy* (1694), following earlier usage, include as secondary meanings the ideas of filial love for one's father and mother and patriotic devotion to one's country.

1.2. Piety in Catholic spirituality

In the 16th century "piety" was understood as both a virtue and a gift of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the scholastic definition. The virtue was reverence for God, filial respect for country, for parents, and by extension, for all persons. This meaning had its ultimate roots in Latin writers, such as Cicero and Virgil, and in the early Church with such writers as Saints Cyprian and Augustine. The gift of the Holy

Spirit inspires worship of God as a loving Father and respect for all persons as images of God and belonging to God; it is similar to the idea of Christian love.

In the 17th Century the word "devotion" was often used interchangeably with "piety". Towards the end of the century, however, the word "devotion" fell into some disfavor because of the exaggerated practices of the so-called *dévots*.

Nonetheless, De La Salle uses the word quite frequently (167 times as compared to 295 times that he uses the word piety), often as a synonym for piety, but about half of the time it has the restricted meaning of performing practices in honor of the Blessed Virgin, the saints, or mysteries of the life of Our Lord (which was a common use at the time).

During this period the word "piety" was also used to describe the quality of a person whose whole life was a fervent worship of God, including all acts of Christian virtue.

"Solid piety" was also identified with the practice of certain acts, or exercises, notably prayer, medita-

tion, self-denial, fasting, purity of life, vigilance, spiritual reading, etc. At the same time a danger was recognized in placing too much emphasis on external actions as ends rather than as means. Thus "solid piety" stressed the interior qualities of a disinterested love for God and God's kingdom.

The word piety was extended beyond the idea of

personal virtue to the whole field of activity for this disposition. Thus it became common to speak of practices or exercises of piety, manuals, works (writings), and letters of piety. In other words, piety was a literary genre. In art, the pious pictures became very popular. They came in many forms: engravings, water colours, paper cut-outs.

2. PIETY, THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF DE LA SALLE

2.1. An interior attitude

In his *Duties of a Christian* (CL 20,167) De La Salle states that certain actions of piety can remit venial sins, when these actions are performed with the proper dispositions. The examples he gives include mortifications, depriving oneself of some pleasure for the love of God, giving alms, reciting some prayers, such as the *Our Father*, and certain psalms.

In his writings, De La Salle often refers to exercises and practices of piety, though this restricted, specific meaning represents less than 20% of his use of the word (53 instances out of a total of 295).

2.2. A quality of life

De La Salle also uses the word "piety" to express a broader meaning, that is, the quality of life that animates the whole person. Though there are often times when it is not completely clear whether De La Salle has in mind the restricted or the broader meaning, there are times when he clearly intends "piety" to describe the spirit of the whole life of a fervent Christian, including all acts of Christian virtue.

An example of his using the word "piety" in this broader sense, a quality that transforms a person's whole life, is in his catechism *On External and Public Worship*. The question, "How was the special piety of Saint Barnabas shown?" has this answer, "Everybody regarded him as a person full of goodness, and clearly guided by faith and the Holy Spirit" (CL 22,271 = DC 44,17,6).

Other examples are in De La Salle's observing that the piety of John the Baptist's parents "was not a sufficient model for what God was asking of him" (MF 138.2), and noting that the piety Saint Bruno "acquired in the ecclesiastical state" did not satisfy him (MF 174.2). In both instances the saints were called to seclusion from the world, extreme mortification, and

continual prayer in order to achieve the piety God expected of them. This may give some insight into what De La Salle understood as the conditions for achieving the ultimate of piety, at least for some persons.

A final example of De La Salle's use of piety to refer to a person's whole way of life may be in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. He speaks of the reward a Brother will have when his former students conduct themselves wisely, "know their religion well, and possess piety" (MR 207,3 quoting Tt 2,12).

2.3. "Exercises of piety"

De La Salle speaks of piety as being one of the qualities necessary for a teacher, and as a characteristic of specific practices or "exercises": vocal and mental prayer, reading, signs of reverence. Pupils also must be trained in piety, as this is part of their education as Christians.

2.4. Pious books and holy pictures

There are a few occasions, especially in the *Conduct of Schools* (CL 24, passim), when De La Salle refers to pious books, maxims and hymns, and pictures which can inspire piety.

It should be noted that De La Salle does not speak of piety as an attribute of God or as a gift of the Holy Spirit, nor to describe love and respect for one's country or parents.

2.5. De La Salle's own practice of piety

In his biography of De La Salle, Canon Blain does not speak explicitly of the Founder's piety. However, this virtue is implied in the exposition of the saint's faith and charity, especially in the description of his great reverence for the priesthood (CL 8, 236f) and his practice of prayer and the presence of God (CL 8,270f).

The early biographers agree that De La Salle was inclined to religious practice from his youth. Both his father and grandfather trained him in the recitation of the divine office. Other examples of De La Salle's piety are seen in his choice of the priesthood as his

vocation even before he was eleven years old, his fidelity to this vocation after his parents' death, his care of his sisters and brothers as their legal guardian, his identifying with the work of the teachers, and his heroic dedication to the founding of the Institute.

Piety in today's world is best understood as the spirit of religion, or a desire for interior life, called the "Christian spirit" by De La Salle. As such, it is the fundamental aim of the Christian school. The word itself is unlikely to inspire students in many countries today: piety is not part of their vocabulary.

However, education in the spirit of faith, based on knowledge of the Gospel, could inspire students with the kind of piety De La Salle was speaking about. He would say that this is a principal object of the spirit of zeal, which is acquired as a result of prayer, vigilance, instruction, and the good example of the teacher (RC2JO).

Complementary themes

Charity - Love
Devotion
Education

Example
Exercises
Faith

Hymns
Prayer
Religious
Spirit of Christianity

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88. PRAYER

Summary

Insert: The daily prayers of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (extracts).

1. Prayer in the days of De La Salle

1.1.Liturgical prayer 1.2.Private prayer 1.3.Teaching about prayer.

2. Prayer in the life of De La Salle.

3. Prayer in the writings of De La Salle

3.1.Texts 3.2.Why pray? 3.3.Pray to whom? 3.4.Pray for whom? 3.5.What should we ask for? 3.6.When should we pray? 3.7.Interior dispositions for prayer 3.8.The social context of prayer 3.8.1.In the family or school context 3.8.2.At daily Mass 3.9.Mental prayer in order to "unite oneself interiorly" with God.

4. The interest of De La Salle's teaching on prayer for our days

4.1.Prayer nourished by Scripture 4.2.Ministerial prayer for educators.

1. PRAYER IN THE DAYS OF DE LA SALLE

1.1. Liturgical prayer

In the predominantly Christian atmosphere of French society in the days of De La Salle, prayer occupied a significant position.

Liturgical prayer, first of all, was characterised by a clear gap between clergy and faithful, and between those who knew Latin and those who did not (the *ignorantins*), despite all the efforts that had been made to explain liturgical words and gestures, and to make congregations take an active part through singing, processions, etc.

Numerous French dioceses of the day had their own rites, with their own liturgical texts which were added to those of Pius V's missal or substituted them. Latin was used throughout.

1.2. Private prayer

"Little Offices" were becoming available for use by lay people and women religious. These prayer

books included certain parts of the divine office, in particular the psalms, and showed a decided fondness for private devotions (eg. to the Divine Child, our Lady and St Joseph).

Mental prayer was held in high esteem, and its practice spread to such an extent that among certain people there was a noticeable turning away from private vocal prayer. Contemporary written evidence of this esteem is abundant, either in the form of "methods of mental prayer" or collections of subjects for meditation.

Private devotional practices, for individual or group use, became very common. This can be seen from the prolific production of pious works containing prayers for the sick, the dying, the souls in purgatory, for various needs, for times of trial, doubt, suffering and mourning. In spite of papal warnings, new litanies were put into circulation, some of which have survived to this day.

After Jesus' "holy relatives", the saints most frequently invoked are those who cure people, and those whose feasts are a feature of rural life. In more educated society, and especially in the writings of Pierre de Berulle and the French school of spirituality, christocentricity had led to a strong devotion to Our Lady as well as to the mysteries of Jesus Christ — his childhood, his Passion, the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart.

1.3. Teaching about prayer

The leading spiritual authorities not only recommended their followers to pray at regular times, but also urged them to perform all their actions in a spirit of adoration and in union with the interior dispositions of the Incarnate Word. They recommended them

to imitate Christ interiorly, and to have one and the same mind, heart and will as he.

The catechisms of the time all speak of prayer. They examine its traditional characteristics by means of a commentary on the *Our Father*, or on the basis of a more theoretical plan:

- The need and benefits of prayer
- Whom to pray to
- Whom to pray for
- When and how to pray.

Certain manuals, but not all, go further and suggest a real interiorisation of the faith. They urge the reader to learn prayer flowing from an intense spiritual inspiration. As we shall see, this what De La Salle proposed.

2. PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF DE LA SALLE

De La Salle's love for prayer dated from his childhood. As a canon, he took part assiduously in the public prayer of the Church. As the time of his ordination came closer so his life of prayer developed. His life was a continuous conversation with God. Up to the very end of his life, he made every effort, like the other Brothers, to be present at community exercises, especially at vocal prayer (MAR 2 = CL 6,19; CL 8,238 and 278; LA 4,7).

What did prayer mean for him? If we are to believe his first biographers, it was "a delight" for him, and one of his "normal weapons" (MAR 117 = CL 6,123), the only one he was happy to use on his enemies. Prayer was a "sure refuge" for him when he needed the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, his "recourse" in order to obtain special graces, and the source from which he drew "the necessary greatness of soul to accomplish the work to which God called him" (CL 8,280f; cf. MAR 59,117 = CL 6,73 & 123). He considered time he had not been able to devote to his ordinary exercises as a loss. This was the case when he was ill for a long time, but he made sure he made up properly for these "losses" (MAR 243 = CL 6,219).

"The servant of God loved prayer so much that anywhere was suitable for it, even the streets of Paris" (CL 8,283). In the same way, he found any time suitable for prayer, during the day and often during the

night, in all the circumstances of his life, but especially before taking important decisions (MAR 19,38, 47,74,106,232; CL 8,119,280,290,365). In the *Rules I have imposed upon myself* (CL 10,115 = EP 3,0,6), he promises to pray whenever a Brother asks for his advice or confesses something serious. Elsewhere in his "personal programme", he says he will pray before leaving the house (1), before travelling (11), when passing in front of a church (17), at the beginning of each action (18), when entering the house or his room (19). We can note in this text that De La Salle makes a personal commitment to practise the same points he recommends to all Christians in his catechism (CL 20,4S8f = DA 405,5).

De La Salle prayed for a very broad spectrum of persons and institutions: for Christians in general, his parents and friends (LI 120,4), his penitents, the sinners he tried to convert, his disciples, his Institute, his activities and the Church. Regarding his Brothers, not only did he pray for them and with them, but when his young community was going through a difficult period, he would establish a prayer rota for the Brothers lasting all day (MAR 95 & 117 = CL 6,105 & 123; CL 8,134, 223, 283, 346, 349; LC 97,1-3).

He prayed "with his mouth and his heart", as vocal and mental prayer were described at the time. He promised to recite the *Our Father* each day "with the

Daily prayers of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (extracts)

MORNING PRAYER

Let us adore God and pay him our respects

I recognise, O my God, that I am unworthy to appear before you and to pay you my respects, having so often abused your goodness and your grace. With great humility I beg your forgiveness for this abuse and for the great number of sins I have committed up to the present moment. I am resolved, with the help of your holy grace, to love nothing but you and in you, and to love you with my whole heart.

I unite myself with my Saviour Jesus to offer you in him and through him all the adoration which is your due. In union with him, I thank you for all the graces and for all the benefits which it has pleased you to give me: for giving me life, for letting me live till now, for making me a Christian, for withdrawing me from the world and delivering me from my sins, for letting me survive this night and giving me this day to serve you.

I offer you all my thoughts, words and actions of this day, so that they may be all consecrated to you and may obtain for me your holy love which is all I wish.

I offer you the new life you have just given me by awaking me from sleep. I beg you that it may be for me a life of grace and that I can say from now on that it is no longer I who live but that it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.

Do not allow, O my God, that there remain in me anything which is opposed to your holy will. Destroy in me all my inclinations and annihilate in me all my natural sentiments which would like to take possession of my heart, so that it acts only through your divine Spirit.

For the sake of your love, I promise to do all the violence to myself that is necessary in order to die to myself and to live only for you. I renounce my own mind and all the pleasure I could have through the use of my senses. I abandon myself entirely to you to suffer today as much as you will wish.

Give me, O my Saviour Jesus, the perfection that you say you want of us, in your holy Gospel, as well as the union you asked your eternal Father for us before you died.

PRAYER BEFORE DINNER

Let us ask God for the grace to take our meal in a holy manner

I adore, O my God, the goodness which made you institute meals in order to restore our strength and preserve our lives.

I adore the holy intentions you had in their institution, which were that we might re-establish in ourselves what had been destroyed by work, and give ourselves to your service with renewed strength.

I adore the holy dispositions Jesus Christ your Son had during the meals he took while on earth, in order to teach us to sanctify our own.

In order that I may unite myself to his holy dispositions and correspond to your holy intentions, fill me so intimately with your holy presence that I may approach the table only with the greatest respect and in order to satisfy only my needs [...].

Fill me with your Holy Spirit in order to preserve me from any avidity I might have for this food, and that I may renounce all the sensual feelings that might be aroused in me during the meal. While my body takes its food, O my God, make my mind find its satisfaction in you, and my heart take pleasure in tasting the sweetness of your love.

There is general agreement that these ancient prayers used daily by the Brothers — a fact attested in writing as early as 1738 (AMG) — were composed by St John Baptist de La Salle. Their content links them to the

EVENING PRAYERS

Let us renew our attention to the holy presence of God

May our prayers rise up to you, O my God, and may your mercy come down upon us.

Come within us, Holy Spirit, and sanctify us. Fill our hearts with your holy grace and kindle in us the fire of your divine love. And as you have united a great number of different nations in the same faith, strengthen us also in the faith and union you have given us and which we cannot preserve without you.

Let us adore God and pay him our respects

May the most holy and indivisible Trinity be blessed now and forever and ever.

I adore you, Jesus Christ my Saviour, and I thank you for having saved all mankind by your sufferings and death on the cross. You who suffered so much for the love of us, have mercy on us.

I adore you, O my God, with the most profound respect, and I love you with all my heart as the one who gave me my being, who redeemed me and who has given me all kinds of graces, and because you are infinitely good in yourself and infinitely lovable. I adore and I love your infinite perfections, and I ask you for the grace to make me participate in them. I am yours, O my God, because you have made me what I am. Make me also all yours so that, having nothing else in view but to love you, I may never do anything that is capable, not only of separating me eternally from you, but of depriving me of your holy love for even a moment.

I accept willingly all the sufferings and pains you wish me to suffer in this life, because such is your pleasure and because they will earn for me eternal happiness. And as I wish to try to please you by my entire conduct, O my God, make me love all that you love and hate all that displeases you.

You want me to love you, dear Jesus. Since in order to deserve you love we must lead a life similar to the one you led here on earth, give me the grace to enter into the practices of your holy life and to imitate you in your sufferings so that I may be always inseparably united to you.

Let us thank God for his graces and his benefits

I thank you, O my God, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, for all the graces and all the benefits it has pleased you to give me: for giving me life and preserving it till now, for making me a Christian, for withdrawing me from the world and delivering me from my sins, and for all the special graces you have had the goodness to give me today [...].

Let us ask God forgiveness for our sins

O My God, I most humbly beg your pardon for all the sins I have committed against your divine majesty. My heart is filled with sorrow, and the cause of its sorrow is the consideration of your goodness, the horror you have for my faults, the punishment they deserve and the state in which I am of not being able to do adequate penance.

O my God, how could I have been so wretched as to fall into sin again so many times, after always having promised to change my life. I am very confused to appear before you after so many falls and infidelities. If I were not convinced of the greatness of your mercy, I would be justified, in my present state, not to have any hope of forgiveness. I come before you, therefore, attracted by your goodness and all covered with the precious blood of my saviour Jesus, begging you to recognise me in his livery, and to preserve me in your holy grace. I assure you, notwithstanding all my bad inclinations and the disordered affections of my heart, that I wish to belong totally to you and never offend you [...].

Let us abandon ourselves entirely to God, and offer him the sleep that we are going to have

O my God, I offer myself entirely to you: do with me whatever you wish. My life is in your hands.

If you wish to take it from me, I give it to you. If you leave it to me, I am happy to keep it. I abandon myself entirely to your holy will.

I offer you, O my God, the sleep I am about to take in honour of your eternal repose and of the repose my saviour Jesus took while he was on earth.

[...] I accept this repose as the image of your peace, the restoration from my weakness, the end of my sinning, the preview of my death and the image of the repose we enjoy in heaven.

greatest possible devotion, attention and faith" (CL 10,116 = EP 3,0,20) and not to go to bed till he had finished reciting the rosary which he said as he walked along the street. He had made for himself "a small collection of short prayers and elevations of the heart to God called ejaculations, all taken from the psalms and passages of Holy Scripture, all most tender and affectionate, so as to say to God only what he himself had taught us to say to him" (CL 8,292; cf. rW.,103, 283, 290).

Teaching others to pray was one of De La Salle's great concerns as Founder. As soon as he began to help with the organisation of the schools and the training of the teachers, he persuaded them to decide to

follow "daily exercises" together at fixed times, in which prayer occupied a central place. In 1681, which was such an important year, he concentrated on familiarising them with these exercises. The novices, who joined him subsequently, grew up "in the shadow of his prayers" and grew spiritually by learning mental prayer. The slightly older Brothers were guided in their *ongoing formation* by their Founder who would not accept, except as a temporary measure, any lifestyle that did not leave sufficient time for mental and vocal prayer (MAR 27, 30, 163 = CL 6,41, 45, 159; CL 8,367). Finally, he wanted his Brothers to pass on to their pupils what they practised themselves, in order to inspire them with a love of prayer and to teach them how to pray (MD 60,3; MR 202,2).

3. PRAYER IN THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

3.1. The texts

In addition to leaving us his own example, De La Salle bequeathed to us numerous texts on prayer in his writings. These occur in the *Duties of a Christian* (CL 20,403-494 = DA 400; CL 21, 243-304 = DB 4; CL 23,457f = PA 0,29); throughout his *Meditations*, and in particular in MD 36-39 and MD 62; in the *Collection*, regarding vocal prayer (CL 15,195-200 = R 16,4) and mental prayer (CL 15,8 = R 7).

His book on the *Exercises of piety which are performed during the day in the Christian Schools* contains the vocal prayers which divided up the day of the pupils from the time they arrived at school till the time they left. Several passages in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* indicate the way to pray during a school day.

In *Instructions and Prayers* we are given model prayers. These are very much based on experience and suggest sentiments and attitudes a Christian might wish to express in his conversation with the Lord. Moreover, as De La Salle himself says (CL 17,174 = I 3), these texts have a pedagogical purpose: under the form of prayer, they teach dogma, morals and spirituality.

For the Brothers, the Founder wrote the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* (EM). Primarily intended for the introduction of novices to mental prayer, it offered also the more experienced Brothers more advanced levels of prayer (see 3,9 below).

3.2. Why pray?

"One should not normally have any business more pressing than praying to God" (CL 20,485 = DA 405,4,4).

God is "the Father of lights". From him "comes every perfect gift" (MF 95,1 quoting Jm 1,17). Without him there is no help for our life, no relief. God is "more disposed to give us what we want than we are inclined to ask him" (CL 20,432 = DA 402,1,18; cf. MD 36,1; 38,1). But we must pray to him, that is, ask him for his grace.

Created by God and for himself alone, and blessed daily by his kindness, human beings have an obligation to **pay him homage**: they must constantly show him their gratitude. As adopted children of God, members of Jesus Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit, it is their duty to offer their body and soul to God each day in prayer (CL 20,411 f - DA 401,2).

In order to respond to God's plan and be saved, they must know the right path to follow, and practise the virtues that will help them follow it. They must persevere in doing good, grow in piety, fill themselves with God and his Spirit. Weakened by sin, they need the help of grace to be pleasing to God and to be able to love him. They will obtain this grace by prayer (MD 36,1-2; MF 80,2; 95,1; 107,1; 129,1; 161,1; 174,3; CL 18,52 = E 13,8; CL 20,198 = DA 300,10; CL 20,411 = DA 401,2, If; CL 20,442 - DA 403).

The teacher who has care of souls must realise that he is incapable of producing any good by himself where salvation is concerned (MR 195,1). No undertaking, no work regarding salvation or the glory of God can ever bear fruit unless it is **blessed by God** and "directed by his Holy Spirit" (MF 107,1). "For God alone can impart that true wisdom, which is the Christian spirit" (MF 157,2).

If a Brother wishes to obtain **the graces necessary to fulfil his duties** well (MF 80,2; 95,1; cf. MF 108,1; MR 198,1), acquit himself well of his ministry (MR 196,1), have sufficient enlightenment to form Jesus Christ in his disciples (MF 80,2), help them to acquire piety (MF 157,2), make his ministry bear fruit (MF 159,2 & 161,2), he must have recourse to prayer: "You will not produce much fruit in them unless you have the spirit of prayer to give unction to your words, rendering them efficacious, and penetrating to the innermost recesses of the soul" (MF 159,2; cf. MF 129,2 & 148,2).

These are some of "the marvelous effects produced by prayer" mentioned by De La Salle (MF 157,2), but there are also others. Prayer disposes a soul **to receive the Holy Spirit** and his wisdom (MD 42,3; MF 119,2). As in the days of Moses, it calms "the anger of a God displeased with mankind" (CL 20,422 = DA 401,3,13). It enables us to converse familiarly with God (CL 17,275 = I 6,27) and to participate in the activity of the angels (CL 20,417f = DA 401,3,2). It delivers us from temporal and spiritual dangers (CL 20,421 = DA 401,3,10). It is a divine medicine which removes all malice from the heart (MD 36,2), and keeps temptation at bay (MF 174,3; CL 20,440 = DA 402,2,13; MD 36,3). In fact, through prayer, "God becomes our strength against the devil" (MF 174,3), and disposes us to fight against the world (MF 182,2) by renouncing its pleasures, and gives us an aversion for all earthly things (CL 20,422f = DA 401,3,14).

Prayer draws us **away from sin** (MF 56,3; CL 20,416 = DA 401,2,10). For the sinner it is "a prompt and easy remedy to obtain the grace of penance and pardon" (MD 36,2). "It is necessary to have frequent recourse to prayer" (CL 17,79 = 11,8,14) to obtain or regain grace (MD 68,3; MF 174,3; MF 191,2; MF 122,6; MD 56,3).

Prayer **makes Jesus Christ live in the hearts** of his faithful in order to transform them (CL 20,419 = DA 401,3,5; CL 22,156 = DC 42,6,6). It alone makes it possible to assimilate the maxims of Jesus Christ (MF 78,2). It makes it easier to practise virtue (MD 36,1; CL 20,414f = DA 401,2,8). It obtains perseverance in good (LC 101,5) and in the religious state (MF 174,3), even in the midst of persecutions (MD 78,3).

The Christian, therefore, is invited to imitate the prayer of Jesus Christ, who asked his Father to sanctify in the truth those who would believe in him (MD 39,2). As the believer makes his way towards God, prayer is useful to him as a source of consolation in his sufferings. It disposes him to bear his sufferings (MF 192,3), strengthens and supports him (CL 20,422 = DA 401,3,14; LI 122,6). Nothing can take away the joy that comes from prayer (MD 34,2; cf. MD 18,1).

In a word, "prayer is the light of our soul" (CL 20,413 = DA 401,2,5). It is as necessary "as light is necessary in the world, as life in the body to preserve it, as medicine for a sick person to cure him" (CL 20,416 = DA 401,2,11).

That is why the Founder recommends his disciples to be assiduous in prayer (MF 95,1). All Christians must consider it necessary for salvation: "I believe that it is necessary to have frequent recourse to prayer and that we cannot be saved without praying to God with attention and piety" we read in the Creed written by De La Salle for the pupils (CL 17,79 = I 1,8,15: cf. the article on *Instruction* in the present volume). We cannot abstain from prayer except for some urgent necessity (CL 25,157 = FD 26), when it is linked to the function we exercise (CL 25,158 = FD 40).

No one is exempted from the need to pray, neither the rich, nor those who earn their livelihood by manual work and have to ask for their daily bread. The just, no less than anybody else, have to say to God: "Forgive us our sins" (CL 20,447f = DA 403,1,10-13).

There is no valid reason that can excuse us from prayer, which is a means "all the easier to employ as it is ever at our disposal, and we may use it whenever we so desire" (MD 36,1).

3.3. Pray to whom?

Strictly speaking, we should pray to the **Father** who is the source of all that is good. He alone is good, he alone is our reward, he alone can preserve our life and give us his Spirit, his grace and his forgiveness (CL 20,457-459 = DA 404,1,1f).

Jesus Christ. Lasallian prayer, like all Christian prayer, is addressed to the Father through the intercession of Jesus Christ by virtue of his redemptive action and infinite grace. By the offering of his life and his death he became our mediator: "Our confidence in prayer cannot have good effects unless it is founded on the merits of Jesus Christ [...] for it is only through him [...] that we have access to the Father" (CL 20,432 = DA 402,1,20).

Because he is the only Son of God, our mediator and intercessor with the Father, and because through him we have access to this same Father, we can hope that our prayer will be heard (MD 62,2; CL 20,459f = DA 404,1,6).

The Holy Spirit. His presence is a necessary condition for prayer (CL 20,424 = DA 402,1,2). De La Salle speaks frequently of his presence in us so that he can pray in us and for us (MD 62,2; CL 17,248 = I 6,2,2).

The ability to pray is a **gift of the Spirit**: "As we do not know what we should ask of God [...] it is necessary for the Spirit of God [...] to tell us what we need and to make us properly disposed to obtain it from God by our prayers" (CL 20,196 = DA 300,0,7; cf. CL 20,424 = DA 402,1,2).

For the Founder of the Christian Schools, the invocation of the Holy Spirit is a part of the teacher's and pupil's prayer, as well as of the teacher's prayer for his pupils. The teacher asks the Spirit to make known to him all the gifts God has given him (the teacher) so that he can pass them on to his pupils (MF 189,1). At the beginning of the lesson, the pupils ask the Holy Spirit to help them to pray well (CL 18,7 = E 2,3; CL 18,26 = E 8,3). On the first day of the school year, teachers and pupils attend the Mass of the Holy Spirit together (CL 24,203 = CE 17,3,10).

The saints to whom we can and must pray. Their intercession is always pleasing to God, but if they obtain graces for us, it is only through the merits of

Jesus Christ, in which they share since they are his members (CL 20,460f = DA 404,2; MF 183).

Mary is the first of all the saints to whom we can address our prayers. There are two reasons for this: 1. "Because she is the most perfect of all creatures [...] her influence is great with God" (CL 20,464 = DA 404,3). 2. Because "she has very great love for the salvation of mankind, she is always ready to give us her help". It is to her in particular that we should recommend "the salvation of our soul". We should also ask her to obtain for us "the grace of God in this life and his glory in the next" (CL 20,467 = DA 404,3,5). We must pray to her every day (CL 22,212 = DC 43,6,3).

In the Christian Schools, the first and short prayer the pupil says at the beginning of the lesson is addressed to Our Lady (CL 24,3 - CE 1,1,9). Each day also prayers are said to St Joseph (CL 22,277 = DC 44,18,9) and in a general way to the pupils' patron saints and to those of their parishes (CL 18,12 = E 2,16).

The **angels** and particularly the guardian angels. Teachers and pupils owe them respect, devotion and confident and grateful prayers (CL 18,12 = E 2,15; CL 18,35 = E 9,10; MF 172,3). Among the angels, we should invoke St Michael in particular (MF 125 & 169), "the leader of all the angels who remained faithful to God" (MF 169,1) and who "gave glory to God with the other good angels, and cried out: 'You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive all glory'" (MF 169,2).

3.4 Pray for whom?

Lasallian prayer is catholic, that is, universal. It is important to pray **for everybody** without distinction (CL 20,452 = DA 403,2,2), for oneself (CL 17,83 = I 1,7,41), for both the just and for "those whose virtue wavers" (CL 20,453f = DA 403,2,5).

We must pray **for the souls in purgatory** because they cannot pray for themselves (MF 185,3; CL 22,218 = DC 44,2,4). We must recommend to God our deceased teachers, pupils and others who have been recommended to our prayers (CL 18,18 = E 4). We have a special obligation to pray for the souls of our parents, friends and benefactors; for those who are in

purgatory through our fault; for the most forgotten souls or for those who suffer most (CL 22,218f = DC 44,2,4).

For the living. Our intentions must include especially Christians who are in communion with the Catholic Church. We have an obligation to pray for all the needs of our holy mother the Church (CL 17,31 = I 1,6,34; CL 24,79 = CE 7,3,5), asking God "to support and extend the Church" (CL 20,454 = DA 403,2,7). In the same way, we must pray for the leaders of the Church: the Pope, the local bishop, parish priests, priests and other ministers of the Word of God (CL 17,31 = 11,6,34). We must pray also for those who exercise temporal power (CL 20,454 = DA 403,2,7).

The importance of prayer for the Church must not make us forget those who are separated from it: schismatics, heretics, Jews or pagans (CL 20,453 = DA 403,4,2). The Christian should not exclude from his prayers those who persecute and calumniate him (MD 5,2; CL 20,455f = DA 403,2,9).

There should be a special place in our prayers for our friends, parents, benefactors and teachers who are still alive, for all those who continue to help us or who have worked for our salvation (CL 20,455 = DA 403,2,8).

-The teacher prays constantly **for his pupils** (CL 15,139 = R 14,6,7; MF 186,3; MF 187,2). But "especially for the conversion of those who have evil inclinations" (MF 186,3; cf. MD 56,3; MF 122,3). The Christian teacher is concerned for the salvation of his pupils, in imitation of Christ, "who seeks the lost sheep" (MR 196,1 quoting Lk 15,4). "You must devote yourself much to prayer in order to succeed in your ministry, constantly presenting to Jesus Christ the needs of your pupils" (MR 196,1).

De La Salle invites the Brothers to pray **for one another** (LA 20,19; 22,12; 25,14; 26,12; 31,24; MD 39,3), for deceased Brothers (LA 18,3), for "the needs of the community" (CL 15,139 = R 14,6,7) and for current business matters (LA 21,18). They should pray also "to make the Institute grow and bear fruit" (MR 207,3).

We should not pray for the saints who, having achieved eternal happiness, "can no longer have hopes

or desires" (CL 20,457 = DA 403,2,12), nor for the devils and the damned, "for whom it is impossible to do penance" (CL 20,456 = DA 403,2,11).

3.5. What should we ask for?

In the prayers composed by De La Salle, there are innumerable requests addressed to God. The most noble one must surely be: **that the Holy Spirit inspire us** to procure the glory of God, our salvation and that of others. This is what Jesus taught his disciples, as the Founder recalls in his commentary on the Our Father (CL 20,442f = DA 403,1,1).

The glory of God. That his name be considered holy by all mankind. That we should want his Kingdom to come, and want his grace and eternal life. That his kingdom come even here below. That his will be done and that his loving plan be accomplished in each of us (LA 16,11; 45,7; MD 3,3). That we should think, speak and act according to his will (CL 20,409 = DA 401,1,8) and that we should be saved by fulfilling the commandments and making our flesh subject to the spirit.

Our salvation. To the question "Does God always answer our prayers?", De La Salle answers "Yes", on certain conditions, in particular, providing "we ask him what is necessary for our salvation" (CL 21,260 = DB 4,3,20).

It is quite legitimate to ask God for physical nourishment and health (LC 97,3); for the spiritual bread of grace, of the Eucharist and of the Word (CL 20,447 = DA 403,1,12; CL 20,451 = DA 403,1,20); for what is good (MD 4,3); for physical well-being and the goods of the present life; for the good of the soul and for eternal life (CL 17,37 = 11,6,46; CL 20,406 = DA 401,1,2; CL 20,451 = DA 403,2,1 ;MD 3,3; MD 62,2); for perfection and holiness (LC 97,3; MD 3,3; MD 39,2); the removal of evil (MD 39,1); for the forgiveness of sin and the remission of punishment due (CL 17,182f = I 3,8).

The salvation of others. Lasallian prayer is apostolic. It asks "God for the light and grace necessary to secure success in all that we undertake for him" (MF 107,1). It also presents to God the needs of the young people entrusted to the care of the teacher (MD 62,2).

3.6. When should we pray?

De La Salle has much to say about this in his writings. We should pray without ceasing since, according to St Augustine, the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ must be one of constant prayer (MD 5,2; 42,3; CL20, 435 & 437f = DA 402,2,3 & 402,2,8).

In practice, this means praying at various times spaced out throughout the day and, if possible, planned beforehand. In this way, Christians can follow the recommendation of the Lord to pray always (CL 20,437 = DA 402,2,7). It is enough not to let a day pass without devoting some fixed time to prayer (CL 20,438 = DA 402,2,8).

In order to make all his actions a prayer, a Christian must "offer them to God" by uniting himself "with the intentions and dispositions which [...] Jesus Christ had, and by doing them always for the love of God" (CL 20,488 = DA 405,5,2).

De La Salle insists in particular on certain moments of the day. At times he is referring to the school day, at other times, to the daily Christian life of a lay person:

The beginning of the day. On waking up, show piety by kneeling by the side of the bed and praying (CL 17,105 = 12,1,6; CL 18,30 = E 9,1,1; CL 20,114 = DA 203,0,20; CL 20,436 = DA 402,2,4; CL 20,484 = DA 405,4; CL 20,490 = DA 405,5,4).

The end of the day. It is "our duty to thank God every evening for all the graces he has given us during the day". This is the first purpose of evening prayer. The second is "to ask his forgiveness for all the sins" committed during the day (CL 20,486 = DA 405,4,3). We can never dispense ourselves from saying evening prayer (CL 17,221 = 14,1,5; CL 18,30 = E 9,1,2; CL 19,53 = RB 201,1,144; CL 20,14 = DA 101,4,4; CL 20,436 = DA 402,2,4; CL 20,484f = DA 405,4). To omit saying morning or evening prayer would be to neglect one's salvation, show disrespect for God's majesty and live like a pagan who has no knowledge of God (CL 20,484 = DA 405,4).

Before and after meals. In the Lasallian school, lunch and the afternoon snack are taken in the classroom. The teachers must make the pupils understand that "if they are told to eat in school, it is in order that they can learn how to eat properly [...] and to pray before and after" (CL 24,8 = CE 2,1,7; cf. CL 18,32 =

E 9,3,3; CL 19,83f = RB 204,1,219; CL 20,437 = DA 402,2,6; CL 20,491 = DA 405,5,7f).

At school. The readers of the *Duties of a Christian* are invited to say a prayer whenever they enter or leave a place, whether it is their own home or the place where they work. In the same way, the pupils are told to say a prayer when they enter the school and at the beginning and end of lessons. If a pupil breaks a school rule, after receiving the statutory punishment, he must say a short prayer kneeling down (CL 20,490 = DA 405,5,5; CL 24,5 = CE 1,1,9; CL 24,82 = CE 7,4,4; CL 24,111f = CE 10,2; CL 24,176 = CE 15,9,10).

In church. When a Christian enters a temple consecrated to God, whether by himself or for an act of public worship, he does so essentially in order to pray. He takes holy water (CL 22,30f = DC 20,3), attends Holy Mass (CL 20,152 = DA 212,0,2; CL 18,31 = E 9,2,2), joins in processions, pilgrimages and jubilee celebrations (CL 22,11 = DC 10,4; CL 22,20 = DC 10,6; CL 22,113 = DC 30,13).

Everywhere. There are many other circumstances in which De La Salle invites us to pray: entering or leaving a place (CL 20,489f = DA 405,5,3), when a person visits us or we visit a person, and before going on a journey (CL 20,491f = DA 405,5,9). Engaged or young married couples are invited to pray as a preparation for their new family life (CL 20,396 = DA 310,4,6f).

For Christians, Sunday is much more a day consecrated to prayer than a day of rest (CL 20,121 = DA 205,0,6). Other occasions in the liturgical year are similar (CL 22,67f = DC 30,1,3; CL 22,72 = DC 30,3,1; CL 22,90 = DC 30,7,4; CL 22,97 = DC 30,10,2; CL 22,109 = DC 30,12,1; CL 22,141 = DC 42,2,7; CL 22,182 = DC 42,11,12; CL 22,216 = DC 44,2,1).

When tempted. When a Christian is tempted to do evil he must pray (MF 172,3; CL 20,97 = DA 201,2,8; CL 20,428 = DA 402,1,11; CL 22,79f - DC 30,4,8f). De La Salle's exhortation is addressed to Brothers tempted to give up their vocation, or overwhelmed by the difficulties of community life (MF 125,2; LI 66,2; MD 36,1; MF 122,2; MR 196,1; LC 38,32). However, all Christians are invited to pray in times of moral trial (CL 20,428 = DA 402,1,10f; MF 172,3), when they are sick spiritually (MD 71,1) or physically (CL 20,493 = DA 405,5,13).

A person who offends God is invited by De La Salle not to be discouraged, but to become converted by having recourse to prayer (CL 20,302 = DA 307,3,19; CL 20,493 = DA 405,5,13).

3.7. Interior dispositions for prayer

Faith. The basic disposition is "the faith and trust with which we have recourse to prayer", because "God's compassion for your misery is greater than your desire to be freed of it" (MD 38,2 & 1).

Love. "It is only to the extent that one loves God that one thinks of him" (LC 92,5). This maxim taken from a letter written to a Brother for his spiritual direction gives us an insight into the style of Lasallian prayer. It throws light on the definition in the *Duties*, which reads: "The word prayer signifies a request one makes to God with humility and insistence" (CL 20,411 = DA 401,1,12).

Forgiveness. In a letter to a religious, De La Salle repeats what he says in his commentary on the *Our Father*, that is, that God could never listen favourably to a person who refused forgiveness, because "aversion for one's neighbour and resentment because of insults prevent our prayers from reaching God" (LI 119,1; cf. CL 20,448 = DA 403,1,13).

Humility. Far from despising humble hearts, the Lord always accepts the prayers of the humble (CL 14,49 = EM 5,153; MD 38,3; CL 20,429 = DA 402,1,13). He comes down to those who cannot raise themselves up to him (CL 20,429f = DA 402,1,15).

Insistence or perseverance. If we ask God for "sanctity and perfection", says De La Salle, we should continue asking till we obtain them (MD 39,2). Regarding the way to be insistent, we must imitate the Gospel parable and pray "to the extent of being importunate" (MD 37,2 quoting Lk 11,9). Why should we persevere? Because often God hears our prayer only after much insistence on our part; because perseverance is a sign of our confidence; and because the difficulty we have in obtaining some gift from God makes us appreciate it more (CL 21,259f = DB 4,3,8).

Fervour. We must pray with a great desire to obtain what we ask for. God wants this and gives us his graces in proportion to our desire, when "spiritual favours and anything to do with the salvation of our soul are involved" (CL 20,428 = DA 402,1,9).

Simplicity of heart (LI 126,11) and true **interior devotion** (CL 20, preface = DA 0,0,13). According to De La Salle, the external forms of prayer (physical and verbal) are good and necessary, but never sufficient. To these forms must be added the interior dispositions without which they would be worthless.

Without devotion, understood in this way, "it is difficult for prayer to be wholly pleasing to God". However, it is not necessary "for this devotion to be felt or to be manifested exteriorly" (CL 20,427 = DA 402,1,8).

Prayer is not very efficacious unless it is accompanied by **mortification**. De La Salle tells each Brother: "Often remind yourself that you must be a man of prayer, for you have to intercede not only for yourself but also for those for whom you are responsible, and for the good of their souls. But in order to make your prayers fully efficacious, join thereto some mortification" (MF 187,2; cf. MF 95,2).

In his letters, the Founder warns the Brothers about dissipation which is an attitude incompatible with prayer (LA 51,10; LA 57,1; LI 90,4).

In more general terms, he teaches that **listening to God** is a condition for prayer. We have an example of this in MD 62 where he comments on a passage from St Luke's Gospel: "My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves" (Lk 19,46). He says: "As soon as you lose the spirit of prayer and a love for this holy exercise, God will [...] consider you rather as one unworthy of your employment, which is really his own work" (MD 62,1). "Do you sometimes reflect on the great happiness you enjoy in having the Holy Ghost dwelling in you, as in a temple, and while abiding therein offering up prayers for you? Abandon yourself entirely to the influence of this Holy Spirit that he may ask of the Eternal Father all the graces that you need" (MD 62,2).

When prayer becomes profound to this extent, it transcends all the normal distinctions between praise and petition, as Our Lord says: "Your Father knows what you need" (Mt 6,8). It becomes an interior attitude of one's whole being, the soul breathing. What De La Salle says about spiritual deafness is apposite: "We learn to speak to God only by listening to his voice, for the art of conversing with him can be taught only by God himself. He has his own language, and

he talks solely to his friends and confidants" (MD 64,2).

3.8. The social context of prayer

In his catechisms and works of piety, De La Salle teaches how to pray in the family or school context and, of course, when taking part in the liturgies of the Church. For the Brothers and novices, he includes a "method of mental prayer" as a way of teaching them true meditation.

3.8.1. IN THE FAMILY OR SCHOOL CONTEXT

"Vocal prayer is good to the extent that it is accompanied by prayer of the heart. [...] Vocal prayers can be said in public or in private" (CL 20,471f = DA 405,1,8).

First of all, it is important to dispose oneself interiorly for prayer by external attitudes indicating a wish to pray. Taking holy water (CL 22,32f = DC 20,3), "kneeling down, stretching out the arms, lowering the eyes, being recollected interiorly and exteriorly" (CL 24,6 = CE 1,2,8) are means he recommends as being excellent.

An effort has to be made to remove distractions, prayer often being a struggle (CL 20,426 = DA 402,1,6). He makes a distinction between voluntary or culpable distractions and those that are involuntary, which impose an effort on the believer and can become a source of merit (CL 20,425 = DA 402,1,4f).

The prescribed vocal prayers, with which De La Salle deals at some length, are the traditional formulas of the Church: the sign of the cross, the creed, the *I Confess* and especially the *Our Father*, "model for all other prayers" (CL 20,444 = DA 403,1,4).

These prayers were known by heart by everybody. For those who learned to read, there were other forms of prayer possible, as Blain recalls: "When we begin by teaching children to read French, they at least know how to read it well by the time they leave school. Since they read it well, they can instruct themselves in Christian doctrine; they can learn it from printed catechisms; they can sanctify Sundays and feasts by reading good books and by well-composed prayers in French" (CL 7,375; cf. article *Reading in French* by J.L. Schneider in the present volume).

3.8.2. AT DAILY MASS

Much of what De La Salle had to say on this topic can be found in his *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass, Confession and Communion*. This work was first published in 1698 and, if we are to believe the Royal Censor, consisted of three separate texts, one on the Mass, one on confession and one on communion.

96 pages are devoted to the Mass. These are divided more or less equally between teachings about the Mass and prayers. In this latter section, De La Salle offers two series of prayers to be recited during Mass: 1. "Prayers during Holy Mass, taken from the ordinary of the Mass". 2. "Other prayers during Holy Mass which are related to all the actions and prayers of the priest during Mass".

Under this last heading, De La Salle suggests prayers which are at the same time personal, reflecting some of his favourite themes, and ecclesial, nourished by liturgical sources.

Some of these prayers are addressed to Jesus Christ. For example, before Mass: "My Saviour Jesus, I shall attend Holy Mass to give you honour and to thank you for all your goodness and especially for dying for me" (CL 17,71 = I 1,8,1). Before the consecration: "O my Saviour Jesus who, by the words of the priest, are going to change the bread into your body and the wine into your blood, change me also completely by your grace, destroy my passions, make me give up my inclinations and ensure I have no other desire but to love you and to carry out your orders" (CL 17,84 = I 1,8,28).

Other prayers, and these are more numerous, are addressed to God the Father. For example, before the *Introit*: "I am confident, O my God, that you have given me back my life by forgiving me my sins. It is with this in mind that I approach your holy altar" (CL 17,74 = I 1,8,5). At the Offertory: "Accept, O my God, the offering that I make to you, together with the priest, of the bread which will be changed into the sacred body of Jesus Christ. [...] Accept also the offering I make to you of my body and of my senses" (CL 17,79 = I 1,8,17).

The Offertory ends with a prayer addressed to "the most Holy Trinity". There are frequent prayers ad-

dressed to the Father requesting the gift of the Holy Spirit either for the Church as a whole or for oneself (CL 19,83 = I 1,8,25f; CL 19,58 = I 1,7,38). Only one prayer is taken verbatim from the liturgy, the *Our Father*, and this is hardly surprising. As lay people rarely went to communion, De La Salle includes for them a prayer "for spiritual communion when one does not receive communion physically".

These texts met a definite pastoral need. On Sundays and feast days, Mass was sung, but on the other days it was read, almost completely in a low voice, by a celebrant with his back to the congregation. The result was that many of the faithful recited the rosary. De La Salle put forward an alternative, not only nearer to the spirit of the liturgy, but also in the language the people spoke and couched in simple terms.

We have the comments of the comte de Vauréal, who lived in Paris, near the school in rue St Placide. He expresses his admiration at seeing the Brothers' pupils going to daily Mass, "each one with a small prayer book in his hand, and no one saying a word". It was for schoolchildren like these that the *Instructions and Prayers* was written (quoted by G. RIGAUT in *Histoire generate de l'Institut...*, vol. II, p. 224).

3.9. Mental prayer in order to "unite oneself interiorly" with God.

When the schoolmasters in Rheims began to live a community life, their daily prayers included a time for mental prayer.

We read in the *Memoir on the Habit* (1689) that applicants to the community are taught "mental prayer and other exercises of piety" (CL 11,349 = MH 0,0,7). More details are given in the manuscript entitled *Practice of the Daily Regulations*, which Maurice A. Hermans considered to be "a faithful description of the first practices introduced into the small Rheims community, probably in 1682" (CL 25,4). The text opens with the following words: "One rises always at half past four. [...] At five o'clock, the bell is rung for mental prayer. [...] One then goes to the oratory for prayer. Vocal prayers are said first, followed by the reading of the subject for mental prayer. Mental prayer is then made until six o'clock" (CL 25,95).

Canon De La Salle could not suggest to his followers to pray silently for more than half an hour each

morning without first teaching them how to relate to God in this new way. The method he suggested they adopt was included in the *Collection* printed in 1711, in the chapter entitled "Method of Mental prayer" (CL 18,8 = R 7). Mental prayer according to this method goes through 3 stages and consists of 21 successive acts: stage 1 (recollection) 9 acts; stage 2 (application to the subject of mental prayer) 9 acts; stage 3 (final thanksgiving) 3 acts.

De La Salle explained this method in greater detail in his *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, in which he also tried to give a more personalised formation to the novices and the Brothers. In 1989, a work was published by Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage (CL 50) on this whole subject. Space forbids anything more than a brief reference to some of their observations:

1. The insistence on beginning mental prayer by "putting oneself into the presence of God" (CL 14,4 = EM 1,9), and on remaining aware of it for as long as possible.
2. The eminently affective character of Lasallian mental prayer. In fact the first two stages, which are symmetrical, have themselves a three-stage structure, which we can outline as follows: 1. Approaching God (faith, adoration, gratitude). 2. Seeing oneself in the light of God (humility, confusion, contrition, applying the mystery to oneself). 3. Uniting oneself to God (resolving to live in Christ, in the sight of God, according to the spirit of the mystery, virtue or maxim which has been the subject of mental prayer), and asking God for the grace to do so.
3. The link between mental prayer and asceticism, seen in numerous texts. For example: "The more a soul attaches itself to God, the more it detaches itself from occupation with creatures and, consequently, from the attachment and affection it had for them" (CL 14,5 = EM 1,11). For De La Salle there is a close and necessary link between mental prayer and the ascetic life, whereas the method is only a help, which should be given only relative importance.
4. The *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* includes an invitation to go beyond the stage of using methods, and encourages the use of interior liberty and leaving oneself open to the movement of the Spirit of God. See the article *Simple Attention* by Joseph F. SCHMIDT in *Lasallian Themes 2*.

4. THE INTEREST OF DE LA SALLE'S TEACHING ON PRAYER FOR OUR DAYS

4.1. Prayer nourished by Scripture

Scripture is one of the essential points of reference in Lasallian prayer. Basing himself mainly on the New Testament, the Founder affirms the liberating power of prayer, its medicinal properties for healing the soul, and its power to obtain God's forgiveness and to strengthen a person in adversity (CL 20,417f = DA 401,3).

De La Salle finds inspiration in many scriptural texts for his teaching about what we should ask for in prayer, for whom we should pray, when we should pray, the texts of prayer we can use, the conditions which make prayer efficacious and the external attitudes which should accompany prayer (MD 39; CL 20,405f = DA 401,1,1).

In the models of prayer that he proposes, De La Salle uses the example of the spiritual attitudes of the great exponents of prayer in the Bible: Jacob, Moses, the Spouse in the Canticle, John the Baptist, the Gospel centurion, Peter, Martha and Mary... (CL 17,214; 259; 260; 271; 273 = I 3,37,4; 6,14,1; 6,15,1; 6,24,1; 6,25,1).

Wishing the faithful to see God's salvation as something occurring here and now, De La Salle recalls the stories of the Sacred Books so that, as they pray, the graces and the prodigies of Bible days may recur in their lives (CL 17,262; 279 = I 6,16,2; 6,30,2).

Prayer based on the Scriptures was an integral part of Lasallian school life from the very beginning. Every day, the children praised God with the words of psalm 116; they asked for forgiveness by reciting psalm 50, and expressed their trust in God's mercy by saying psalm 129 (CL 18,5; 14; 15 = E 1,7; 3,3; 3,5,1).

4.2. Ministerial prayer for educators

Lasallian prayer is real life prayer: it is situational, that is, rooted in the life of the ministry and in the work of the teacher. In the Brother's prayer, work in school is the topic of his dialogue with God.

He admires the goodness of God who gives man the means of achieving knowledge of the true good, and who chooses him to proclaim Jesus Christ and to make him known (MR 197,1; MF 87,2). He adores

the paternal providence of the Father who enables him to have the right dispositions to fulfil his ministry well (MF 131,1). He contemplates Christ the Good Shepherd in order to imitate him in his own work of salvation (MR 196,1). Like De La Salle, he consults the Lord to know in concrete terms what his vocation is (MF 99,2). In the presence of God, he examines his fidelity to the commitments of his ministry, so that by evaluating what he has done, he can improve his educational work (MR 205; 204,1). In the presence of God also, he resolves to improve what he has neglected in his work and to purify his intentions in his teaching of the truths of salvation (MR 206,1; MF 108,2).

He thanks God for calling him to a holy and sanctifying state and employment, for making use of him to bring the benefits of education to poor children, for making him participate in the ministry of the Apostles and Pastors of the Church, and for rewarding him even in this life for this saving work (MF 99,1; 113,1; MR 194,1; 199,3; 207,2 & 3).

He consecrates himself to him to procure his glory, associating himself with his Brothers to conduct schools for the service of the poor (CL 2,42 = EP 2), and so contribute to the accomplishment of God's plan of salvation (MR 197,1). With this aim in view, he frequently surrenders himself to the Spirit of God (MD 62,2; MR 195,2; 204,1 & 2) and prays to him for himself and for his pupils (MR 195,3; 196,1; 197,3; 199,1; 204,2; MD 37,3; 56,3; MF 122,1 & 2; 157,2; 172,3; 187,2).

In the *Duties of a Christian*, the treatise on prayer ends as follows: "The principal effect that these prayers should produce in us" — the acts of faith, hope, praise, humility, resignation, etc — "is to make us practise the maxims of the Holy Gospel" (CL 20,494 = DA 405,5,15). For De La Salle, our lives indicate what our prayer is like, demonstrate if we really pray. In other words, prayer must permeate the life of a person, and life must bear witness to the holiness of the person who prays. The faith, hope and love we speak about in prayer must be demonstrated concretely in our lives.

And so, the contemplation of the wounds of Jesus Christ and the feelings that we have as a result of this

contemplation must produce in us the total renunciation of sin (MD 28,2). We adore Providence by falling in with its plans (MF 131,1). "Admire the good-

ness of God [...] in procuring for man the knowledge of the true good [...] and offer yourself to him to help the children entrusted to you to acquire it" (MR 197,1).

Complementary themes

Celebrating
Consecration
Devotion to St Joseph

Exercises
Love - Charity
Marian devotion

Piety
Simple attention
(contemplation)

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89. READING IN FRENCH

Summary

Insert: Quotation from the biographer Jean Baptiste Blain (CL 7,375).

1. The memoir in support of reading in French

1.1 .Origin 1.2."Here they are in substance" 1.3.An introduction to the Lasallian approach to education.

2. First of all, Canon Blain.

3. What kind of world are we living in?

3.1 .The world of the Christian schools 3.2.Experience and usefulness 3.3.The St Yon boarding school.

4. Did you say "inculturation"?

4.1.The question of meaning 4.2.What purpose does it serve ? 4.3.Barbarians 4.4.Inculturation and acculturation: to possess the world 4.5.An example: the pronunciation of French.

5. The future belongs to them

5.1.In a given society 5.2.Reading and educating oneself in order to live as a Christian.

Instructing, educating, teaching, learning, have all to do with culture. To have learnt one form of language rather than another affects the way in which one assimilates the culture in which one lives and, therefore, one's integration in society, and the degree of mastery and freedom one can attain.

De La Salle and the first Brothers did not shirk this problem. Their practice of making the pupils learn French first in the Christian schools demonstrates their basic attitude towards popular culture and the inculturation successfully promoted by their educational approach.

1. THE MEMOIR IN SUPPORT OF READING IN FRENCH

1.1. Origin

The text (given on a following page) comes from the biography of De La Salle written by Canon Jean Baptiste Blain. It recounts a discussion between De La Salle and the Bishop of Chartres, Mgr Godet des Marets, a friend of the Founder and connected with the court at Versailles. (He was a chaplain in the school

for young noblewomen, and a protégé of Madame de Maintenon).The discussion was about the fact that reading was taught first in French and then in Latin in the Brothers' schools. This was, in fact, a characteristic of Lasallian schools in France up to the 19th century. These were schools for the poor in which pupils learned to read first in French and then in Latin.

1.2. "Here they are in substance"

Did the conversation reported here really take place? Doubtlessly not, for who would have been there to report it? Is it a kind of "memoir" drawn up by De La Salle and used by Blain when writing his biography (as he did in the case of the *Memoir on the Beginnings*)? In any case, Blain does not claim to quote De La Salle literally, since he introduces his text with the words: "Here they are in substance".

1.3. An introduction to the Lasallian approach to education

While Blain clearly makes his own contribution to this document, we can still discern in it many very Lasallian ideas, in particular, those developed at greater length in the *Conduct of the Christian schools*. As it

stands, this memoir is a good introduction to the main characteristics of Lasallian pedagogy.

The author gives ten reasons (nine, in fact) to justify the changes introduced and maintained by De La Salle in his primary schools, especially that of giving French priority over Latin.

This approach reflects some of the main principles behind De La Salle's teachings on the school, instruction and education, and on the role they play in the lives of the children of the artisans and the poor in a given society. It shows how a school can provide a positive response to a certain number of needs experienced by the poor, and how salvation in Jesus Christ involves life as a whole and is not restricted to a consecrated building, but is rooted in daily behaviour that leads to freedom.

2. FIRST OF ALL, CANON BLAIN

Several remarks in the text clearly belong to Blain and not to De La Salle: "Women religious who recite the divine office in Latin really need to be able to read it very well, and yet of the hundred girls who come to the gratuitous schools, there is hardly one who can become a choir Sister in a monastery" (7).

The education of girls and the female religious vocation were not subjects De La Salle dealt with in his writings for the Brothers or the Christian Schools. On the other hand, it is clear that Blain, who was responsible for a community of Sisters, was concerned about this question.

"Finally, experience shows that almost all those who do not understand Latin, who have never studied it and are unable to use it, especially lower class

people and, even more so, the poor who come to the Christian Schools, never know how to read Latin properly, and when they do read it they arouse pity in those who understand this language" (10).

The argument based on aesthetics expressed here is far from being Lasallian. Moreover, De La Salle asked Brothers who had studied Latin before joining the community to forget it. This, of course, did not prevent them from teaching the children to read in Latin when the time came.

On the other hand, a number of Blain's technical comments on the pronunciation of Latin and French agree with what is written in the *Conduct of Christian Schools* (cf. what Br Maurice Auguste says about this text in CL 10,1 IOF).

3. WHAT KIND OF WORLD ARE WE LIVING IN?

3.1. The world of the Christian Schools

What do these children do? What are the concrete circumstances of their lives? Given the existing constraints, in what way can instruction and education help them? The choice of educational priorities must be based on a serious and compassionate view of reality.

And so, the intellectually correct theory — that, since French is derived from Latin, knowledge of French should be based on a knowledge of Latin — is,

in practice, incorrect. Children are born in a given cultural context: they do not need to go through a process of linguistic ethnology from Latin to French in order to learn their mother tongue and, in the final analysis, to adapt to the world in which they live.

Their world is one in which going to school lasts a very short time because, "in the first place, when they are old enough to work they are withdrawn from school, or they cannot attend any longer because they need to earn their living" (8).

Quotation from the biographer Jean Baptiste Blain

The established practice in the Christian Schools is to begin by teaching the children to read French before teaching them to read Latin. For Mgr Godet des Marets [Bishop of Chartres], this did not seem to be the natural order, and he wished to change it. But M. de La Salle, who had made changes in the past only for very serious reasons, asked the prelate to hear him out, and gave such convincing reasons for the changes he had made, that the prelate agreed. Here they are in substance.

"1. Reading French is much more useful and widespread than reading Latin.

2. Since the French language is their natural tongue, pupils find it incomparably easier to learn than Latin, understanding as they do the first but not the second.

3. As a consequence, much less time is needed to learn to read French than to learn to read Latin.

4. Reading French prepares one to read Latin, but as experience shows, reading Latin is no preparation for reading French. The reason for this is that, in order to read Latin well, it is sufficient to stress all the syllables and to pronounce all the words well. This is easy when one knows how to spell well and read French. It follows, therefore, that persons who can read French well, have no difficulty in learning to read Latin. On the other hand, after having spent a long time learning to read Latin, much time has still to be spent learning to read French.

5. Why does it take a long time to learn to read Latin? It has been said that this is because its words are barbaric for any person who does not understand their meaning, and because it is difficult to remember syllables and to spell correctly words whose meaning one cannot imagine.

7 (*sic*). What is the use of knowing how to read Latin for people who will never use it in their everyday lives? To what use can the boys and girls who attend the Christian and gratuitous schools put their knowledge of Latin? Women religious who recite the divine office in Latin really need to be able to read it very well, and yet of the hundred girls who come to the gratuitous schools, there is hardly one who can become a choir Sister in a monastery. In the same way, out of a hundred boys who attend the Brothers' schools, how many are there who go on to study the Latin language. And if there

were some, would it be right to concentrate on them to the detriment of the others ?

8. Experience shows that the boys and girls who attend the Christian Schools soon give up coming, and do not attend long enough to learn to read both French and Latin well. In the first place, when they are old enough to work they are withdrawn from school, or they cannot attend any longer because they need to earn their living. This being so, teaching them first to read Latin has the following consequences: they leave before learning to read French, or to read it well; they leave not knowing how to read Latin particularly well, and soon after, they forget all that they have learnt. As a result, they never learn to read well in either Latin or French. Finally, the most damaging result is that they hardly ever learn Christian doctrine.

9. In fact, when one begins by teaching young people to read French, they at least know how to read it well when they withdraw from the school. Once they know how to read it well they can teach themselves Christian doctrine; they can learn it from printed catechisms; they can make Sundays and feast days holy by reading good books and by well-composed prayers in the French language. On the other hand, if they leave the Christian and gratuitous schools knowing only how to read Latin, and badly at that, they remain ignorant all their life of the duties of Christianity.

10. Finally, experience shows that almost all those who do not understand Latin, who have never studied it and are unable to use it, especially lower class people and, even more so, the poor who come to the Christian Schools, never know how to read Latin properly, and when they do read it they arouse pity in those who understand this language. It is of no use whatever, therefore, to spend a long time teaching people a language they will never use".

(CL 7,375)

You need to live with poor people, or at least know their life from close-up, in order to realise something very typical about it: the precarious nature of family resources make it necessary for children to start work at an early age. (See also the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*). Education that wishes to serve young people (and their families) properly must use pedagogical methods and provide courses that take these factors into account.

This is a world also in which people will never use Latin during their lives (7), nor in their family, human, social and professional relationships. We should note the insistence here on life as it really is.

It is the world of the poor who attend the "Christian and gratuitous" schools of the Brothers (7), not to become part in an elite (7), which would leave the social background it knows to do secondary studies and study the Latin language, but rather to obtain solutions to some of their needs. These include learning how to read, write and count, so that they can have a better life in their society, and achieve independence and Christian freedom, the latter, by teaching themselves Christian doctrine (9).

In practice, the children we are speaking of can never stay at school long enough to assimilate the whole programme: "They leave before learning to read French, or to read it well. [...] They never learn to read well in either Latin or French" (8). And so, is it up to these poor children to fit in with existing school structures, or should it be the school that makes a real effort to meet their needs? If a school insists on an elitist view of knowledge — Latin first, then French — it cannot fulfil its mission: "They hardly ever learn Christian doctrine" (8). It is the school that has to change, therefore, if it is to be of use to the poor and not only to a very small minority.

3.2. Experience and usefulness

The author of this memoir uses two expressions which are significant: "as experience teaches us" (4,8,10) and "of what use" (1,7,10).

On the basis of realism and an analysis of needs, choices can be made regarding young people that are both educational and liberating. This is what De La

Salle did. He insisted that the poor children had to begin by learning to read French so that they could have a real chance to achieve freedom. He refused to allow himself to be trapped either in a particular curriculum, or in centuries-old intellectual habits which, in fact, he himself had experienced, or in a set of choices favoured by the intellectual and social elite. For him what was important, was **the needs and the present and future life of the greatest number.**

To be a Lasallian educator is to do practical and liberating things for young people.

3.3. The St Yon boarding school

We see this realism and this priority given to the needs of young people and their families in the approach adopted towards the social category catered for at the "St Yon boarding school" (CL 8,32f).

Here we are no longer dealing with the poor, but with families that are quite well-off, living in the large city of Rouen with its port and commerce, and connected with the leading and dynamic exponents of the French economy, based on the industries, commerce and businesses that had sprung up around the port. These parents wanted their children to follow specific courses: commerce, hydrography, technical drawing (machinery, buildings), accounting, algebra and geometry, foreign languages and, of course, reading and writing. Their life and needs are bound up with the world of the written word, of administrative or commercial documents. All these courses are means to enable them to cope well in their kind of life. They too have no use for Latin, and the Brothers did not include it in the curriculum at St Yon.

Even though the Christian and gratuitous schools and the school at St Yon had their own specific aims and clientele, the former catering for the poor and the latter for an up-and-coming social class of French society, they nevertheless shared important characteristics: the fact **they dealt with the real needs of their pupils and with their future life in society; and their concern to put them into contact with what was modern, and to give them access to it**, at whatever level.

4. DID YOU SAY "INCULTURATION"?

What we have been saying about learning to read in French first is really all to do with *inculturation*, in the very modern sense of the word.

To what culture does education give access? Is this education organised in a way that is in harmony with this culture? What are the fundamental values of the social background concerned and how can they be made a part of one's life? Does education make it possible at the same time to consider contact with other cultures, to establish inter-cultural dialogue?

4.1. The question of meaning

Language is at the heart of every culture and therefore also at the heart of inculturation. In practice, does it bring you into contact with a certain number of values and enable you to adopt them? and go beyond them? Does this culture and, consequently, this language, help you to understand the world better? to make it exist in a way that you can take possession of it, something all mankind is called to do?

The author of this *Memoir on learning French* does not express himself in these terms, of course, but it is clear that these are the questions he is asking and the answers he is proposing.

The first point he makes is that **the mother tongue can give access to life**: "Reading French is much more useful and widespread than reading Latin" (1). Since the French language is their natural tongue, pupils understand it while they do not understand Latin (2).

It is worth noting here the modern stress on meaning in the questions that are posed: Understanding or not understanding (2), understanding the sense, imagining the meaning (5); Does the language (culture) we acquire at and through the school give us access to the meaning of life, to make it part of our consciousness and personality? Does this language enable us to orientate ourselves in this world and to interpret it?

He bases himself on his personal observation of the methods used to teach Latin and French, and on the results they produce: "Reading French prepares one to read Latin, but as experience shows, reading Latin is no preparation for reading French. The reason for this is that, in order to read Latin well, it is sufficient to stress all the syllables and to pronounce

all the words well. This is easy when one knows how to spell well and read French. It follows, therefore, that persons who can read French well, have no difficulty in learning to read Latin. On the other hand, after having spent a long time learning to read Latin, much time has still to be spent learning to read French" (4).

4.2. What purpose does it serve?

The other point he deals with is the usefulness of learning, and he links it with effectiveness. What purpose does it serve? Its aim is not to provide a purely utilitarian education, but to ensure that this education attains its goal, that is, to enable young people to cope with the kind of life that awaits them, and to provide them with the means to be able to do so.

Being able to read French is very useful because it is "more widespread" (1), it is "easier" (2), and faster to learn (3). It can lead to other things: being able to read French is "a good basis for learning to read Latin" (4). On the other hand, there are problems about learning to read Latin: there is no real motive to do so (7), and it is of no use to most people. It is "of no use" whatever, therefore, to spend a long time teaching people to read a language well when they will never use it (10).

4.3. Barbarians

The remark in paragraph 5 shows clearly that inculturation is involved here: because "its words are barbaric for any person who does not understand their meaning". We have here an inversion of conventional cultural values: the civilised language, that of clerics and classical authors is called barbaric, because it has no meaning for the common people.

4.4. Inculturation and acculturation: to possess the world

Any process of inculturation in education has its starting point in reality and seeks to restore (or give) meaning to reality. Educating means enabling young people to discover by themselves the meaning of the world. This process seeks to ensure that what is learnt is both effective and useful, especially when there is urgency involved. One of the characteristics of true

inculturation is its capacity to break down frontiers. Language is one of the means which gives access to meaning.

The effectiveness of this educational process of inculturation in Lasallian schools was reinforced by both the rigour and coherence of their approach regarding school structures, discipline, training of teachers, and by the standards that were pursued in reading, writing, arithmetic. The overall aim was to respond to the practical needs of artisan and poor families.

The Christian schools of De La Salle were characterised by the dual process of inculturation and acculturation. As the children began to understand and learn about their world — inculturation — they also became a part of the dominant culture, that of the social elite — acculturation —. This latter process has to do with social attitudes, relations, behaviour, food, etc... and is treated, in particular and at some length, in the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness*.

The result for these children and young people was a new self-image and a new view of the world, which engendered self-esteem and energy. Finally, they were given back access to their own culture and the real possibility of understanding it better and extending it.

In the world of De La Salle social changes took place very slowly, assimilation was spread over a longer period, and the risk of distortion was much less than it is today. Such factors enabled the children of the poor to take their place once again in the history of their country and, in their turn, play an active part, as is illustrated by the French Revolution.

4.5. An example: the pronunciation of French

De La Salle speaks of linguistic matters — an important aspect of culture — in the *Conduct of Christian Schools*, chapter 3, entitled "Of Lessons", and in the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness*, chapter 9, entitled "Of Speech and Pronunciation".

The chapter in the *Conduct* describes the process of learning to read in the Christian school, beginning with the alphabet and syllables, moving on to reading the *Book of Psalms* in Latin, and ending with the *Rules of Propriety* and manuscripts.

This chapter seems to be purely technical: it deals with the most effective means for children to master

reading in French. The aim, however, is to make the children learn and practise all the rules of French pronunciation, and to pronounce French perfectly. (CL 24,35 = CE 3,6,5) This perfect pronunciation is that of the leading citizens of society. At the other end of the scale there is the bad country accent which should be lost (CL 24,27 = CE 3,2,16).

The inculturation involved in learning to read — understanding what one is reading, reading more quickly — is accompanied by acculturation. New habits and new ways of speaking have to be acquired. The children enter a new world, characterised in particular by the control of one's body:

- The person reading should open his mouth wide,
- he should not pronounce his letters through his teeth,
- he should speak neither too fast nor too slowly,
- without an affected tone,
- in a natural tone.

It is worth asking ourselves what is meant by a "natural pronunciation". One of the tasks the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness* sets itself is to promote natural behaviour. What is meant here is behaviour in which the body is controlled by reason. This is the classical view of nature: nature is submissive, organised, regulated and mastered.

The careful pronunciation of French is none other than that of the court, adopted in the towns by the elite: the nobility, intellectuals, bourgeoisie, administrators and clergy. It is a sign that a person belongs to the dominant social group.

In a certain way, Lasallian education is subversive because it tends to blur the boundaries separating the classes, if not the castes, which were so important at the time. If a poor person can speak like a duke, how can you tell who is a duke and who is a poor person?

The acquisition of this pronunciation also gave access to some of the practices of the emerging new society. By cutting out having to go through Latin, De La Salle prepares his children to enter directly into the world that counts and will count even more in the future: that of the leading citizens of towns who can read, write and express themselves clearly.

The *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness* begin by speaking of pronunciation in purely physiological and even mechanical terms, referring to the mouth, lips, teeth and tongue as instruments to be used in elocution.

Very quickly, however, moral attitudes and psychological judgment are introduced as governing factors: one should not say a single word hastily or thoughtlessly; persons with lively temperaments find it difficult to pronounce well; speaking correctly, that is, in a soft and calm tone of voice, without shouting, without harshness, makes a person seem respectable and benevolent (CL 19,28 = RB 109,1,85f).

The opposite of this educated pronunciation is to be found in a number of unsuitable ways of speaking:

- "Changing the tone of voice like a preacher, lowering the voice at the end of words, changing the pronunciation of letters.
- Speaking in a way that is feeble, slow and languid, as if one were complaining. This denotes a certain flabbiness and languor, a normal and acceptable defect in a woman.
- Speaking in a rough and uncouth way. Peasants speak in this way.
- Speaking in a high-pitched and rapid manner" (CL 19,30f=RB 109,1,92f).

It is interesting to note, *en passant*, De La Salle's prejudice against women and peasants. It reflects his social class which could be defined as being ecclesiastical, male, antifeminist and town-dwelling.

At the end of chapter 9, we are given a description of good French pronunciation which is very much the hallmark of a particular culture: "French pronunciation must be simultaneously firm, quiet and pleasant. In order to learn how to pronounce well, one ought to begin by speaking little, saying each word separately, without hurrying, pronouncing all the syllables and all the words" (CL 19,32 = RB 109,1,95).

This definition reflects a passage in the *Conduct of Schools* (CL 24,35 = CE 3,6,5). This passage refers to a type of behaviour typical of a social category far removed from that of the working classes: "Above all, one should converse normally only with persons who speak purely and pronounce well" (RB 109,1,95).

5. THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THEM

5.1. In a given society

What happens when young people who have learnt to read French well leave school (9)? What does the future hold for them?

School is not an end in itself. When you go to it, it is in order to be able to leave it. School is not for the personal satisfaction of teachers and parents, nor to keep up educational or other standards: its purpose is to put the future within the reach of the youngsters.

In the course of this educational process, those at the receiving end play an active part themselves. They are the builders of their own cathedral, for the first form of freedom is learning to be free.

In 17th and 18th century France, society as a whole expressed, understood and fulfilled itself through a certain way of practising the religion of Jesus Christ: all aspects of social life were imbued with Catholicism, and schools prepared their pupils for this society.

5.2. Reading and educating oneself in order to live as a Christian

Paragraph 9 gives the young people of the 17th century an outline of this society. It indicates also how what they have learnt at school enables them to be at ease in this world and to build themselves a solid future in it.

It is a Christian society, in which the catechism and Christian doctrine are determining factors when one becomes part of society, in which Sundays and feasts are kept holy, and in which personal prayer exists and one understands what one is saying. Hence the importance of knowing French.

Understanding Christian doctrine in all its purity is essential in this society — involving a risk of intellectualism, one might add. For this is needed the ability to read well so as to instruct oneself from "good books" (9) and learn the "duties of Christianity" (9). One such good book was the *Duties of a Christian*, a catechism composed by De La Salle. It proposed a

series of practical attitudes and behavioural patterns, and included religious teachings which were the basis of both Christian life and the life of society as a whole.

It should be added that what was proposed by these duties of a Christian and these catechisms was in no

way childish. It invited a person to look upon all facets of his life, his relationship with God, and his social, family and professional relationships from a Christian point of view. It is a book of life for one's whole life.

Learning a language gives young people a means of understanding the life that surrounds them, through a process of open inculturation. It enables them to take their own life in hand, and to take their place in a society in which they are responsible for their own lives and independence. Education offers a way of achieving this.

Helping young people to become free calls for a true process of liberation which lies in a future still to be built. In Lasallian terms we can express this as follows: "To be true cooperators with Jesus Christ for the salvation of children" (MR 196,title), or "To procure for them the means of salvation appropriate to their development" (MR 193,3).

Complementary themes

Child - pupil - disciple

Conduct of the Christian Schools

Conversations

Decorum

Instruction - to instruct

School

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90. REDEMPTION

Summary

1. **The word redemption** means to buy back something or somebody for a ransom or a price. In the biblical tradition the word refers to the action of God in delivering human beings from the bondage to sin.
2. In the seventeenth-century the **theology of redemption** was influenced by St. Anselm, St. Thomas and the Council of Trent.
3. In his **doctrinal writings** De La Salle stresses the doctrine of redemption as mystery with some indications of a theological perspective.
4. In his **devotional writing** De La Salle stresses the passion of Christ and his death on the cross as the central act in the mystery of redemption.
5. De La Salle considered the **ministry of the Brothers** in Christian education as a way of cooperating with the redemptive work of Christ.
6. Although theology today would put more emphasis on the resurrection as an element in redemption, there is much in De La Salle's writing that remains valuable for the Lasallian educator.

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD "REDEMPTION", FROM THE BIBLE TO NICAEA

In a general way, *redemption* has the meaning of buying back something or somebody held in forfeit for a pledge. Thus a person may be said to redeem a pawned object, or redeem coupons and certificates by exchanging them for their equivalent value. Sometimes persons may be said to redeem themselves by restoring their good name through some good action after having lost it through malice or negligence.

In a religious sense, especially in the biblical tradition, redemption refers in its most general meaning

to God's plan to save his human creation from the evil consequences of sin.

The biblical concept of redemption has a variety of overtones that are too complicated to develop adequately in a short space. In the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, for example, the analysis of the redemption theme in the Bible occupies 17 columns. Suffice it to say here that in the Old Testament, redemption is associated with God's deliverance and vindication of Israel through the coming of the promised Messiah.

In the New Testament redemption consists of the deliverance of the human race from sin and the restoration of human creation to union with God by God's action through the merits of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, in his life, death, and resurrection.

The element of ransom or purchase is seen in the Bible when Jesus says: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10,45). Or, as Paul writes to the Corinthians: "You were bought with a great price" (1 Cor 6,20; 7,23). Again, Paul writes to the Romans: "There is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Rom 3,22-26). In the Synoptics, the Eucharistic words of institution over the cup convey the same idea.

The redemptive work of Jesus Christ is not limited to his passion and death but extends from his incarnation through death and resurrection to his intercessory role at the right hand of the Father in heaven. "It will

be reckoned for us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4,24f). The author of Hebrews writes: "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7,25).

In the New Testament, redemption in and through Jesus Christ is often spoken of as *salvation*. Paul writes to the Romans: "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Rom 5,9-10).

The Nicene Creed states: "For us and for our salvation, he descended from heaven, became incarnate [...] suffered [...] died and was buried [...] rose again on the third day". To differentiate between the two concepts, it might be said that redemption is the process and salvation is the result.

2. REDEMPTION IN 17th CENTURY THEOLOGY

The doctrine of redemption is founded on a solid scriptural basis and centered on the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ to deliver the human race from its bondage to sin. Out of this doctrine various theological theories developed to answer questions that the doctrine leaves unresolved. Is the redemption primarily the work of God or the work of Jesus offering satisfaction to God in his humanity? What is the satisfaction for sin demanded by God's justice and in what aspect of the work of Jesus can this satisfaction be found? If God is infinitely loving and could have brought about salvation in some other way, why did Christ have to suffer? Is the human need for redemption the only reason for the incarnation? How is the redemptive act of Jesus applied to the rest of the human race? The principal influences on the theology of the seventeenth century would be St Anselm, St Thomas Aquinas, and the decrees of the Council of Trent.

The classical theory of St Anselm had a strong influence on the subsequent theological tradition. Its

appeal lay in its highly juridical character, so congenial to western thought. In this view, the infinite offence against God in original and actual sin, demand infinite satisfaction. Since no mere human person can perform an act having infinite value, God became man in Jesus Christ. Christ as man suffers the punishment due to human sin, Christ as divine and sinless offers satisfaction that has infinite value.

St Thomas treats of redemption within the framework of the incarnation, and specifically in his treatment of the passion of Christ. Thomas stresses the moral and vicarious nature of the satisfaction offered by Christ rather than the juridical. Christ, as head of humanity, is given grace, not only for himself but also for his members, and so his works are referred to himself and to others the way the works of someone else would be referred only to himself. Since God gives grace to Christ for the attainment of salvation, Christ merits glorification for himself and salvation for all his human creation. Thus Christ's passion brings about our salvation by way of merit, atonement, sacrifice,

and redemption. It was proper for Christ to be the Redeemer because Christ paid the price of our salvation with his own blood, i.e., with his bodily life (*Summa Theologica*, III, q. 48).

The decrees of the **Council of Trent** add to the concept of satisfaction the idea of merit to explain the manner in which human beings are redeemed by Christ (d. 1529).

3. REDEMPTION IN THE DOCTRINAL WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

De La Salle is more concerned with the mystery of the redemption itself than with extensive theological analysis. For him, the two principal Christian mysteries are the Trinity and the redemption (CL 23,310 & 332 = GA 0,2,4 & 0,7,9), a statement that somewhat surprisingly leaves the mystery of the incarnation implicit in Trinity and redemption. Jesus Christ is the Redeemer (CL 20,441 = DA 402,2,16), his name Jesus means savior and redeemer (CL 22,144 = DC 42,3,4), and that is why he came on earth (MD 40,1). Jesus Christ is the personal redeemer and savior for each individual (CL 14,75 = EM 8,215,3; MF 85,2), as well as for the whole human race (MF 93,2). The doctrine of the redemption is stated in the first part of the Apostles Creed (CL 21,21 = DB 1,4,7) and the second part of the Nicene Creed (CL 23,312 = GA 0,2,10).

Following the lead of St Thomas, De La Salle envisions the redemptive work of Christ as embracing the total movement from his incarnation, through his life and death, and on to his resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit on the Church, although St Thomas treats of these events as relating primarily to incarnation rather than to redemption. In the first part of his *Duties of a Christian*, treating of our duty to know God by faith, De La Salle entitles Chapter IV "The Redemption of Men". Under this heading he treats of the Son of God made man, Jesus Christ, before his baptism, his preaching and miracles during his public life, the enmity of the Pharisees, his entry into Jerusalem and the Last Supper, his arrest and trials before Caiaphas and Pilate, his suffering, death, and burial, his resurrection and ascension followed by the descent of the Spirit (CL 20,24-62 = DA 104). Even though he never again uses the word "redemption" in any of the 38 pages that follow the heading, it is clear that De La Salle considers the incarnation, and all the actions of the God made man (and not merely the passion and death) as fundamentally salvific and redemptive.

In the catechism in the form of question and answer, De La Salle uses the Anselmian explanation of why Jesus Christ and no other could make satisfaction to God's justice for our sins: because the one who would make satisfaction to God had to be both God and man. Since the offense which our sins have given to God is infinite, it was necessary that the satisfaction be infinite, something that no other creature could do. Yet satisfaction had to be made by a human being who could suffer and die (CL 21,46f = DB 1,10,7f). Following recent tradition, De La Salle mitigates the harshness of Anselm's theory by noting that it was not strictly necessary for Jesus to have suffered so intensely and die on the cross. Even one drop of his blood or any other action could have atoned for our sins, but he wanted to demonstrate his great love for us and lead us to have a horror for sin (*id.*).

De La Salle develops this idea more extensively in Part I of the *Duties*: "See what Jesus Christ suffered for the love of us. He could have dispensed himself from suffering all this pain and such a shameful death. One drop of his blood, or even any one of his actions, since they had infinite value, could have sufficed to pay the price of our deliverance and to merit for us all the graces that we have obtained through his death. But the Eternal Father willed to hand over his only Son to death on the cross, a death to which the Son offered himself voluntarily, so that we might better understand the enormity of sin, to give us a testimony of his abundant love, and to give us in the person of his Son a great example of humility and patience. In this way God wanted to motivate us to love him with all our hearts and to suffer willingly all the pains that it might please him to send us" (CL 20,56 = DA 104,9,5).

De La Salle rarely refers to Jesus Christ as the Redeemer (only 13 citations) and rarely refers to redemption in the abstract (only 24 citations). On the other hand, he uses equivalent terms, usually taken from Saint Paul, especially in the extensive references to

the passion and death of Christ on the Cross. Even though, as already noted, he considers the entire work of Christ as redemptive, De La Salle concentrates on the passion and death as the accomplishment of redemption.

Thus, the sacrifice of the cross was the "cause of the justification of all people and the source of the graces given to them" (CL 20,272 = DA 305,4,4); the priest in confession makes the sign of the cross to sym-

bolize with Saint Paul "that it is through the cross that our reconciliation with God is effected" (CL 20,322 = DA 307,5,17). When we make the sign of the cross we ask for some favor "through the infinite merits of Christ's passion" (CL 20,VIII = DA 0,0,13). In his meditation for the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, De La Salle notes that Jesus Christ "has reconciled us by his death on this holy cross, as Saint Paul says, to render us holy, pure and irreprehensible before God" (MF 165,2).

4. REDEMPTION IN THE DEVOTIONAL WRITING OF DE LA SALLE

The redemptive death of Christ on the Cross inevitably becomes a major theme in the devotional practices recommended by De La Salle. At Mass, for example, those assisting should be aware that the body and blood of Christ are offered under the form of bread and wine "in memory of the passion and death of Christ" (CL 20,261 & 270 = DA 305,1,1 & 305,4,1). Reception of the sacraments should be frequent since the sacraments apply the merits of the passion of Christ to those who receive them worthily (CL 20,272 = DA 305,4,5). Because the sign of the Cross represents the mystery of the redemption (CL 21,6 = DB 0,2,6; CL 23,307 = GA 0,1,9), it should be made reverently with full attention to the passion and death of Christ that it signifies (CL 20,VIII = DA 0,0,13; CL 21,4f = DB 0,2). On Fridays, the hour prayer in the schools is an act of faith in the mystery of the redemption (CL 18,20 = E 5,6).

Devotion to the passion is consistently recommended to the students (CL 22,89 = DC 30,7,4; CL 23,374 = GA 0,17,10; CL 17,15 = I 1,5,2) and to the Brothers (MD 27; CL 15,14f = R 7,1,4; RC 30,20), in imitation of the great saints (MF 129,3; 152,3; 173,3). Even in his meditation for Christmas day, De La Salle recommends that the Brothers meditate on the sufferings and passion of Christ (MF 85,2).

For De La Salle, devotion to the redemptive work of Christ through the passion and the cross implies that the Christian, and even more so the Brother, be willing to take up his cross daily in the following of Christ (MD 5,3). The priest at baptism makes the sign of the cross as a reminder that "the Christian life is a

crucified life" (CL 20,223 = DA 302,3,3) and that the Christian ought to be prepared "to carry the cross and to suffer for Jesus Christ" (CL 20,227 = DA 302,3,12). The anointing with the sign of the cross at confirmation is a reminder that "the cross is difficult to bear", but also that the sacrament gives "strength and special graces to make it pleasant" (CL 20,238 = DA 302,2,6). The two feasts in honor of the holy cross provide the Founder with the opportunity to remind his Brothers that "it is not enough to adore the cross", but we must also be willing to carry it; "we don't have to look far to find it" since the cross is always with us (MD 121 & 165). Good Friday is the occasion to cite Saint Paul in reminding the Brothers that they should glory only in the cross of the Savior (MD 28,3); for Easter Sunday, De La Salle writes: "Since by rising Jesus Christ has destroyed sin, following Saint Paul, act in such a way that sin will no longer reign in your mortal body, but attach this body with all your disordered desires to the cross of Jesus Christ. In that way you will become a participant by anticipation in his incorruptibility" (MD 29,2).

The acceptance of suffering by taking up one's cross is more than mere imitation of Christ. De La Salle restates the doctrine of St Paul that we continue the work of redemption by "making up for what is lacking in the suffering of Christ" (CL 20,328 = DA 307,6,5).

In his meditation for Wednesday of holy week, De La Salle comments on the words of Jesus as he died: "It is consummated". In this way, Jesus showed that all that he had so ardently desired to suffer for our

salvation was accomplished. Then De La Salle continues: "All that remains now on your part, as Saint Paul says, is to fill up what is lacking in the suffering

of Christ, which means that you must apply his merits to yourself by your participation in his sufferings. Render yourself worthy of such a grace" (MD 25,3).

5. THE TEACHING MINISTRY AS COOPERATION WITH CHRIST IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

In the third of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* De La Salle uses this same Pauline passage (Col 1,24) to urge the Brothers through their ministry in the schools to become cooperators with Christ in the work of redemption: "The death of Jesus Christ was more than sufficient to wipe out the sins of all people and to make full satisfaction for them since God has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ. But the grace that he merited for us does not bring about our salvation unless our will is brought into union with his. It is up to us to realize and complete the work of our redemption. That is what Saint Paul conveys so well when he says of himself, 'I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ'. [...] Since you are obliged to help your disciples achieve salvation, you

must lead them to unite all their actions to those of Jesus Christ, our Lord. [...] This is how you must teach them to benefit from the death of Jesus Christ" (MF 195,1).

It is clear from this passage, and the entire thrust of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, that De La Salle considers the redemption achieved by Jesus Christ as an ongoing process in which the Brothers and their ministry in the schools play a significant part.

Finally, De La Salle envisions even the act of praying fervently as a way for the Brothers to become co-operators with Jesus Christ in the redemption of the souls in Purgatory (MF 185,3).

6. RELEVANCE OF THIS TEACHING FOR TODAY

There are some aspects of the theology of redemption current in the seventeenth century, and therefore reflected in De La Salle, that contemporary theological thought would want to rectify. Although De La Salle, along with many authors, had modified the legal rigidity of Anselm's theory of the satisfaction demanded by divine justice, some overtones of that approach remain, especially in the concentration on the suffering and death of Christ. A better understanding of biblical theology has led today's authors to concentrate less on the sacrificial element and more on the passage of Christ through death to resurrection and glorification.

As already noted, however, despite his concentration on the passion and cross, De La Salle does have a broader view of redemption as encompassing the en-

tirety of God's loving plan of salvation. This extends to all of the events consequent upon the incarnation, not only the "mysteries" operative in Jesus, but also in the mystery of the Spirit communicated to the Church, which is Christ's body.

It is powerful motivation for the Lasallian teacher, still today, to see the work of evangelizing the young, and especially the poor, as a way of cooperating with Christ in the work of redemption.

And since suffering remains an inevitable reality of the human condition, the Founder's reflections on the passion and cross of Christ can still encourage the Lasallian educator to make up in this way for what is lacking in the suffering of Christ, looking beyond carrying the cross to the glory of the resurrection.

Complementary themes

Education	Incarnation	Sacraments
Faith	Ministry	Salvation
God	Mission	Sin
	Mystery	Zeal

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Br Luke SALM

91. RELIGIOUS

Summary

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1. DEFINITION OF "RELIGIOUS" AND RELATED TERMS

Furetiere¹ (1690) gives the word "religious" the same meaning as the mass media gives it when speaking of religious Jews or Moslems. A person is said to be religious when he is pious. By this we can understand a person who maintains a habitual relationship with God, and not only one who has accepted stricter commitments than his religion requires of all its followers. It is only by giving the term a very restricted meaning that we can use it to define the religious as a member of a community, subject to a rule of exemplary life, and often protected by the walls of some monastery or retreat.

Richelet² (1710) says more or less the same thing, but adds that, persons referred to by the restrictive meaning of the term, are characterised by the wearing of a distinctive habit and the three vows of religion, that is, poverty, obedience and chastity.

Bluche's **Dictionnaire du Grand Siecle**³ (1990) does not use the word "community" in the sense of religious house, but emphasises the importance of craft

guilds in the development of piety, in other words, of religious life in the broadest sense of the word.

Apparently, De La Salle could have organised his schoolteachers into craft guilds without habits and without vows, but he did not do so. He preferred a certain withdrawal from the world and a form of community life which led the Brothers of the Christian Schools to adopt a status close to that of the religious life, which was given papal approval.

Gerard Michaux, the author of the section devoted to "religious orders", differentiates between the various kinds of "newly-founded apostolic institutes for men" (preaching, home and foreign missions, teaching, charitable work):

- solemn vows (Theatines, Barnabites, Jesuits);
- simple vows (Doctrinaires, Lazarists, to which we can add the FSC's);
- common life without vows (Oratorians, Sulpicians, Eudists, Foreign Missions).

Furetiere defines **Religion** as "the worship one gives God; feeling, belief in the divinity". But the word sometimes means "piety, justice, exactness". It is used also to mean "fidelity, regularity and exactness in keeping one's word. [...] Religion is used to mean also a stricter profession of Christianity, under a rule which varies from founder to founder. This young man has entered religion".

"Rule is used, when speaking of morals, of just

and reasonable conduct. Regularity, law, model, example. Religion serves as a rule to help us live well. [...] Rule is used particularly to refer to certain constitutions on which religious houses are founded, and which one vows to observe on entering them".

"Regular, adjective, Punctual, exact. A person who lives regularly. Regular is used more especially of those who make vows in a religious house. It is the opposite of secular ecclesiastic".

2. THE TERM "RELIGIOUS" IN CANONICAL DOCUMENTS

2.1. The Council of Trent and decisions of the Church in France

The reform of the "regulars", that is, of religious,⁴ so called in order to distinguish them from "seculars" (Littre⁵), was the task of the 25th session of the Council of Trent.⁶ It stipulated that "in all religions [religious institutes], whether of men or of women, profession will not be made before the age of 16 years completed" and only after "one year's novitiate" (ch. XV). Whoever forces someone to enter religious life is excommunicated. The same sanction applies to those who oppose a religious vocation by force (ch. XVIII). In fact, these norms apply only to religions with solemn vows or, in other words, to religious orders properly so-called. The future of institutes with simple vows and religious communities without vows is not defined.

When the decisions of the special Councils of Tours and Bourges (1583-1584), the royal declarations dated July 10th 1566, and those of the parlement of Grenoble⁷ (1661), decreed that registers of professions be officially kept and even registered with the ecclesiastical court, the reason lay in the civil consequences of solemn vows. Louis XIV, following in this the example of the Council of Trent, forbade the foundation of new orders, or at least, reserved approval for such orders to himself.

By establishing a "register of vows" as early as 1694, the Brothers of the Christian Schools showed their wish to give their new "society" a structure (CL 3,6f). After the granting of the Bull of Approbation in 1725, their wish was fulfilled. Now they made simple vows, dispensation from which was reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff. Blain, doubtlessly reflecting the opinion of the Brothers themselves, considered their vows to be vows of religion (CL 7,353; 8,193).

Consulted several times during the course of the 18th century, the Sorbonne "had no hesitation in declaring that the Bull did not put the Institute into the category of religious orders" (Circ. 406,63), since the Roman Congregation which had given its approval was that "of the Council" (concerned with pastoral matters), and not that "of Bishops and Regulars". It was only with the publication of the Code of Canon Law in 1917 that the concept itself of the canonical religious state was modified, to include in its ranks, religions congregations with simple and public vows.

2.2. The 1983 Code of Canon Law⁸

"Associations of the faithful", private or public, can be formed according to certain norms (can. 268-329). "Societies of apostolic life" (can. 731-746) are distinct from "institutes of consecrated life" (can. 573-730). These latter include "secular institutes" (can. 710-730) and "religious institutes" (can. 607-709). "A religious institute is a society in which, in accordance with their own law, the members pronounce public vows and live a fraternal life in common. The vows are either perpetual or temporary; if the latter, they are to be renewed when the time elapses. The public witness which religious are to give to Christ and the Church involves that separation from the world which is proper to the character and purpose of each institute" (can. 607,2 & 3).

"In itself, the state of consecrated life is neither clerical nor lay. [...] A lay institute is one which is recognised as such by ecclesiastical authority because, by its nature, character and purpose, its proper role, defined by its founder or by lawful tradition, does not include the exercise of sacred orders" (can. 588,1-3).

We learn from the biographers and from research (Maurice Auguste, Aroz, Poutet, etc.) that the Founder

was in touch with numerous religious and was well informed about other rules in existence. In his own

writings, however, De La Salle does not go into much detail at all.

3. MEANING OF "RELIGIOUS" IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS

3.1. In his catechisms

"Religion" usually means the "Christian religion" (Catholic), the only one "worthy of this name" (CL 20,11 = DA 0,0,2). When De La Salle mentions (men and women) religious (CL 20,305 = DA 307,4,7; cf. CL 17,131 = 12,5,10), he refers to a group of persons easily identifiable by his readers (for example, "making fun of priests, religious or those who practise devotion" (CL 17,220 = I 4,1,2).

Speaking of impediments to marriage, he refers to "religious" and the "vows of religion" (CL 20,379; 390; 392; 395 = DA 310,3,10; 310,3,17; 310,4,5). None of this is mentioned in DB, the catechism intended for the pupils. There is a mention of vows of religion in DC (CL 22,114 = DC 30,13,2) and, in connection with the Jubilee and with reference to the Bull of Alexander VI, of "solitary religious" and "cloistered women religious" (CL 22,119 = DC 30,13,13). It was not within the scope of these catechisms to speak of what we call the "religious life", nor even to explain the evangelical counsels.

3.2. In his writings for the Brothers

This topic is not treated any more extensively in the Founder's writings for his Brothers. The MR often speak of the "religion" with which teachers should inspire their pupils and which they should teach them, but the adjective religious is not used.

Outside of the **meditations on obedience (MD 7 to 15)** and of the treatise in the *Collection* on the same subject (CL 15,40f = R 9), it is above all in the **meditations for the feasts of saints who were religious** that the salient character sides of religious life are mentioned. And even this is not always the case (MF 173 on St Francis; MF 177 on St Teresa). In MF 130 for the feast of St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, he speaks of the "order of the Carmelites", and, in several other meditations, he refers to the "order of St Francis" (MF 128, 135, 179, 190), the "order of St Dominic" (MF 117), an "order of Clerks Regular" (MF 153) and an "order of Canons Regular" (MF 135). In none of these meditations is the term "religious" defined. We can

try, however, to deduce what is meant by it by examining the way it is used.

3.2.1. RELIGIOUS AS STRICT CHRISTIANS

Christian and religious constitute a pair of words which appears under two forms. In the first instance, it is used, for example, in connection with "the Christian and religious simplicity" with which Brothers should speak to one another (RC 29,4) and give an account of their conscience (CL 15,30 = R 8,1,9); or with reference to obedience which, without faith, would not be "a Christian and religious virtue" (CL 15,158 = R 15,2,4), for the first condition of obedience is "that it should be Christian and religious" (CL 15,41 = R 9,1,2), that is, that one should obey "through virtue and a spirit of religion" (CL 15,42f = R 9,2,1).

In the second instance, these terms are used to indicate that the requirements of the religious state are stricter than those of a Christian. "The conversation of Christians, and even more so of religious, according to St Paul, ought to be heavenly" (CL 15,112 = R 13,9,3). "A Christian, and even more so a religious, profanes his heart and his mouth when he uses superfluous words" (CL 115,112 = R 13,10,3). To wish to live without true mortification "is not to live as a Christian, and still less as a religious" (MF 190,2).

3.2.2. RELIGIOUS AS NON-SECULARS

Pope St Leo forbade "religious to involve themselves in secular matters". The founder told his Brothers: "This ruling applies to you more than to anyone" (MF 114,3). Does this statement imply that the Brothers are religious? This certainly seems to be the case in De La Salle's letter to Brother Mathias: "What a wonderfully handsome young man you are! How can you talk about yourself like that! Is this the way a religious should speak?" (LA 47,8). The Founder occasionally uses the term religious in the general sense of "persons consecrated to God" (MF 92,2) with reference to the Brothers.

He urges them to imitate the obedience and simplicity of the saints who belonged to "religious or-

ders" (MF113,128,142,150, etc). Quoting St Bernard ("The man in holy religion..."), he reminds them of the "nine fruits of religious life" (CL 15,1 = R 1). He speaks of the person who "enters religion" (CL 20,379 = DA 310,1,4; MF 128,2), who "becomes a religious" (MF 115, 117, 128, 130, 142, 176). But he never applies these terms directly to the Brothers. And when he draws up a list of topics for conversation, he makes a distinction between "virtues which are proper to religious" and "virtues proper and special to the Brothers of the Society" (CL 25,33). While they are clearly related, they are not identical (cf. CL 11,28 note 4).

3.2.3. RELIGIOUS AS PERSONS LIVING IN COMMUNITY

However, non-secular and religious are not synonymous terms, for "obedience should be the distinctive characteristic of persons living in community, distinguishing them from people in the world who enjoy their full liberty" (MD 7,3). So there is another category that has to be taken into account, that of "persons living in community" (MD 7,3), who are distinct from "seculars". The *Collection* and the *Common Rules* set persons living in community alongside religious, "obedience being the principal virtue and the most necessary for religious and for all persons who live in community" (CL 15,40 = R 9,1,1). The Brothers will not speak "of the lack of regularity in a particular religious order or in some other community" (RC 6,8).

MD 7 is the only meditation to speak of a "religious society". An expression used by St Lawrence

Justinian — "entering a religious society" — is put on a parallel with St Vincent Ferrier's reference to being "in religion" (MD 7,3).

Religious communities are mentioned in the *Memoir on the Habit* (CL 11,351 = MH 0,0,27) and in two meditations (MD 11 & MF 92). The meditation for December 31st speaks of order in a religious community: "Obedience is the first virtue in a community, and what distinguishes a religious house from a secular one" (MF 92,1). In the same context, "religious persons" are the equivalent of "religious" (MD 11,2) or "persons consecrated to God" (MF 92,2). Sometimes they are contrasted with "seculars" (*id.*), and sometimes with "their superiors" (12 times in MD 21).

There are, therefore, on the one hand, seculars and secular houses in which everyone enjoys freedom; and, on the other, persons consecrated to God, who live in community, have rules to observe and are bound by obedience. Men and women religious are clearly included among these, but not solitary religious who do not live in community. Religious orders or companies (MF 148, 176) form a group of houses, monasteries (MF 111,115,128, 131, 189) or convents (MF 117,179,190). The word "monk" does not occur in De La Salle's writings.

The Brothers form a special group among those who live in community. They have many characteristics which make them resemble religious: history will increase this resemblance.

4. CHANGES IN THE COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE

Initially, the religious spirit of the Brothers was defined in the *Rules* and in the *Collection*, both of which had been written by the Founder himself. For a long time, these two texts were the only ones in practice that were studied in novitiates. When the treatise on mental prayer in the *Collection* was found inadequate, the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* was added.

4.1. The Bull of Approbation in 1725

The Holy See approved the obligation contracted by the first Brothers to live in "association" and in "community", for an apostolic and educational purpose, subject to obedience and stability. The Bull transformed into vows of poverty, chastity and obedience,

the morally binding commitments which, from the very beginning, had been an inseparable part of the Brothers' lives in the Institute.

The Bull reads as follows: "The Brothers must make it their care above all to instruct children, especially the poor, in all that concerns the manner of living honest and Christian lives. [...] Let no Brother be ambitious of the priesthood or aspire to ecclesiastical orders. [...] Let their vows be those of chastity, poverty, obedience, stability in the said Institute and teaching the poor gratuitously, dispensation from these vows" being reserved to the "Roman Pontiff. [...] Let all the daily exercises, both in the house and in the school, be performed in common". Let children be instructed not only in reading, etc., but, "above all, in

the precepts of Christianity and of the Gospel. And let them learn to recite prayers, to attend public services, and to practise all the other things necessary for salvation". Other articles set out the hierarchical organisation of the Institute, and that of General Chapters.

4.2. From the French Revolution to the 1917 Code of Canon Law

On February 13th 1790, solemn vows were forbidden in France and monastic orders were suppressed. "Secular congregations", however, that performed some social service were exempt. On August 18th 1792, a new law suppressed all confraternities and "lay congregations", including "that of the Brothers of the Christian School" (*sic*).

Eleven years later, on December 3rd 1803, Napoleon Bonaparte approved the re-establishment of the "Frères de la Doctrine chrétienne" (*sic*), who are "simply associated for the gratuitous instruction of young people". This decision includes "nothing that goes against the principles adopted [...] regarding religious corporations" (December 12th 1804). The result was to minimise for a considerable time the role of the vows in the Institute: "Only those who request to do so will be admitted to vows, and no one should fear the disapproval of others if he does not request to pronounce them, provided that his behaviour is good. [...] The renovation of vows will always be the result of a totally free decision on the part of the Brothers, who will not be either forced nor urged to make them" (*Rule of Government*, 1845, 4,2 & 4,20).

In 1860, the Brothers numbered almost 8,000. About a third of these had perpetual vows, another third temporary vows, and the rest no vows at all. From 1880 onwards, the latter, known as "employed novices" were urged to pronounce vows, in particular by the Br Assistant Louis de Poissy, who applied a certain amount of pressure. As the Institute was excluded at the time from State education in France, it sought to bring itself more into line with what the Church required of religious.

In 1900, by his Bull *Conditae a Christo*, Pope Leo XIII conferred religious status on institutes with simple vows approved by the Roman magisterium. After the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1917, employed novices and temporary professed Brothers had to prepare themselves for perpetual profession,

which was now obligatory for everyone after a few years of probation.

4.3. The Renewal Chapter (1966-1967) and the Rules "ad experimentum"

Vatican II was less interested in the religious *state* than in religious *life* and consecrated *life*. The religious character of an institute is defined not on the basis of a certain concept of a state, but on that of the specific intentions of its founder. By asking all congregations to rewrite their rule, the Council invited them to re-express his intentions in the context of the modern world. For the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the 1966-1967 General Chapter was the "renewal chapter" called for this purpose.

The 1967 *Rules and Constitutions* begin by recalling how the Institute was founded, and then go on to define it as follows: "The institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a congregation of pontifical right, composed exclusively of lay religious, consecrated to God to fulfil the apostolic ministry of education" (1c). The *Declaration* (48,2) "notes with satisfaction the strong attachment of the Brothers to the profession of teaching. This function assures them a particular role among the laity in the Church. It adds a new dimension to their religious life, since for them, the exercise of the teaching profession is an integral part of their religious consecration".

The implementation of the Chapter decisions was not without its problems. In 1971, the Brother Visitors who gathered in Rome for the inter-capitular meeting, spoke of the difficulty some young Brothers had when it came to making perpetual profession. They expressed "the wish that a study be undertaken of religious commitment today, expressed by vows or by other forms, in the context of the world situation and the charism of the Institute".

The *International Commission on the Vows* (ICV) which was set up to undertake the proposed study, noted that there was "widespread confusion in the Institute on the relationship of consecration and vows, [...] and the inconsistency between perpetual vows and the ease with which individuals are dispensed from them" (Circ. 406,10).

At the same time, there was an unfounded but persistent rumour that certain Superiors wished to transform the FSC congregation into a secular institute.⁹ And so, when the 1976 General Chapter began its

work, there was a climate of suspicion. The report submitted by the Chapter commission on "Consecration and Vows", which had tried to bear in mind the observations of the ICV, was rejected by the assembly. The Chapter asked the General Council to continue studying the question (Circ. 406,8, prop. 35). In addition, the Chapter wished the Holy See to give the Brothers a special permission to remain in the Institute without perpetual vows. The General Council responded by publishing Circular 406 on December 25th 1977. Not many changes could be made, however, because the *Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes* in Rome refused its permission.

We should note that, in the meantime, with the publication of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, religious status was granted to institutes whose members continued renewing their temporary vows without ever making perpetual vows (see 2.2. above, can. 607,2).

4.4. The 1986 Chapter and the present Rule

The mission of the 1986 General Chapter, which met in a more serene atmosphere, was to bring to a close the *ad experimentum* period which had begun immediately after the Vatican II Council. The *Rule* it drew up retains, in article 2, the definition given in article 1c of the 1967 Rule (see above) and, in article 10, invites each Brother "to take upon himself the responsibility for integrating within his own person these constitutive elements of his vocation: consecration to God as a lay religious, apostolic ministry of education, especially of the poor, and community life". It adds in article 24: "Religious consecration establishes an intimate communion between the person of each Brother and that of Jesus Christ. This consecration is

expressed by vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability in the Institute".

4.5. Religious within the Lasallian Family

There is a widespread desire in the Church today, among lay people and priests, to benefit from the charisma of founders of religious congregations. They wish to share in their mission and spirituality, while remaining in their present state of life. It was in this context that the "Lasallian Family" came into existence. This expression designates "all those who participate in the Lasallian educational enterprise, especially those who are moving towards a sharing of the spirit and the mission of St John Baptist de La Salle" (Circ. 435, prop. 3).

The 1993 General Chapter, in its deliberations on "the shared mission" involving the Brothers and lay people, asks that their specific vocations be respected, and states that "the Brothers' vow of association for the educational service of the poor is an indispensable sign for everyone of fidelity to a mission received from God" (Circ. 435, 3.62). It was this that, in his own day, led De La Salle to link his fate with that of the Brothers. Today, the specific vocation of the Brothers in the Lasallian Family is to manifest, by their religious consecration, this enduring characteristic of De La Salle's life.

In other words, the Brothers are called to manifest in their lives "the radicality of the Gospel and the transcendent dimension of the Kingdom" (Circ. 435,3.61), while, at the same time, sharing their apostolic charism with the other members of the Lasallian Family.

5. "FOR THEM, THE EXERCISE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION" (DECL. 48,2)

Speaking of institutes devoted to the apostolic life, Vatican II states: "While every exercise of the apostolate should take its origin and power from charity, some works by their very nature can become especially vivid expressions of this charity" (*Perfected Caritatis*, 8). In the Brothers' Institute, this takes a more "professional form", because, for them, "the exercise of the teaching profession is an integral part of their religious consecration".¹⁰ Throughout the history

of the Institute, the professional aspect and the religious dimension of the life of the Brother have constituted, not a conflict of interests, but a source of great vitality.

5.1. A regrettable dichotomy

In 1990, the Superior Generals of lay religious institutes declared that there were "three kinds of temptation" their form of religious life had "to face: a ten-

dency to sacralise the lay religious, [...] a tendency to become secularised [...] a tendency towards professionalism".¹¹

A few months earlier, Br John Johnston, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, had written the following about De La Salle's intentions in founding the Institute: "There was certainly never any intention on his part to found a religious community to which would be assigned some useful apostolic activity. His model or theoretical understanding of the Brothers' vocation never admitted a dichotomy between religious consecration and ministry. The model introduced some years later and based on a distinction between principal and secondary end, or generic end and specific end, was foreign to his manner of thinking. Never did he tell the Brothers that they were religious primarily and ministers, ambassadors, Good shepherds, or "representatives of Christ" secondarily. [...] For De La Salle, the Brothers glorified God by living together and by association their total consecration to the Holy Trinity as ministers of Christian education".

Unfortunately, he continues, we have sometimes lost sight of the Founder's model. "There developed among us a clear dichotomy between the 'religious' and 'apostolic' dimensions of our life. [...] Too often the tendency was to identify the 'primary end' with 'religious life' understood essentially in terms of prayer, silence, regular observance, fidelity to the vows; and to identify the 'secondary end' with apostolic activities".¹²

The *Preface* (CL 25,12-15) to the first edition of the *Rules and Constitutions* (1726) opens the door to this dichotomy. The bulwark of a Rule "is an advantage enjoyed by all religious in general, and in particular by the Brothers of the Christian Schools" (§ 2). The "particular end" of the Institute concerns "the salvation of children" (§ 6). The vow of poverty is linked with an article of the Rule: "The Brothers will accept nothing from pupils or their parents" (§ 21). We can see that a certain shift in emphasis had occurred with regard with Lasallian thought. In the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th century, this led to a certain "reductive interpretation"¹³ of the foundation of the institute.

5.2. The insight of the 1966-1967 Chapter

The 1966 General Chapter tried to recapture the true intentions of the Founder. It insisted on the reli-

gious value of the Brothers' educational apostolate: "In the one act, St John Baptist de La Salle established the Brothers as apostles and religious. While seeing to it that the schoolmasters were aware of the apostolic dimension of their work, he led them to offer themselves wholly to the Lord who employed them in his service. The spirit of the Institute is one, although it is expressed in two dimensions: faith makes the Brothers attentive to the design of God for the world; it blossoms into zeal which sustains and increasingly renews this commitment to the service of the members of Christ" (*Declaration*, 22,1).

The point is not whether or not the Brother is a religious, but what kind of religious he is.

5.3. Its development in the 1986 Chapter

Drawn up during the 1986 General Chapter and promulgated in 1987, the *Rule* is the result of reflection on the life and ministry of the Brothers over a period lasting a quarter of a century. The Rule begins by defining the nature of the Institute in juridical terms: "of pontifical right, composed exclusively of lay religious men" (art. 2). It then goes on to show how profession and consecration are intimately linked in the vocation of the Brother.

In conclusion, let us recall five important statements made by this document regarding the Brothers' vocation:

- Inspired by the apostolic spirituality of their Founder, "the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of Gospel ministry" (art. 17).
- "The Brothers live their faith as a gift to be used for their ministry of Christian education" (art. 20). "The spirit of faith kindles in the Brothers an ardent zeal for those confided to their care in order to open their hearts to receive the salvation revealed in Jesus Christ" (art. 7).
- "The Brothers, in fidelity to the call of the Spirit and the charism of their Founder, consecrate themselves to God in order to exercise, by association, their apostolic ministry of education" (art. 2).
- "Commitment to the apostolate is an integral part of the consecration of the Brother to God"¹⁴ (art. 7). "As a lay religious" (art. 10), called "to give a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor" (art. 3).
- "As religious vowed to the ministry of Christian education, the first apostolate of the Brothers consists in the witness of their consecrated life" (art. 24).

¹ Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel contenant généralement tous les mots français*, the Hague, 1690, art. *Religieux*.

² Richelet, *Nouveau dictionnaire français*, Geneva, 1710.

³ Paris, Fayard.

⁴ For a better understanding of the terminology of the time, one can consult the *Mémoires du clergé*. Its abridged version devotes 13 articles to women religious, without previously defining the term. It includes also 28 articles on matters related to men religious, and a special section on "mendicant religious". The term "religious" is partially defined in paragraph II which deals with the "Establishment of orders, congregations and religious houses". As if the word "religious" were completely identifiable with "community", the reader is referred to the section on this term. Likewise, in the paragraph entitled "Religious profession or solemn vows of religion", readers are referred simply to the article on "Vows". Without defining the terms "religious" or "religious house", the work states that "no establishment belonging to orders, congregations or regular houses, can be set up without the consent of the bishop" (vol. XIV, col. 409). This could mean that De La Salle obtained the consent of the bishop before opening the novitiate at Vaugirard because he intended to set up some form of regular, that is, religious life (cf. CL 7,256, 315, 318). This was not, of course, an approbation of this "new community" or religious congregation, as the term meant in those days (CL 11,55-56). Neither a novitiate nor a habit

are enough to indicate the existence of a new kind of religious. "The approval of the town and its inhabitants is required also" (vol. XIV, col. 411). Without it, the establishment cannot be considered complete (cf. the 1691 vow with Vuyart and Drolin). Necessary also are letters patent from the King and official recognition from the bishop or the Pope. Cf. *Abrégé du recueil des actes [...] du clergé de France*, vol. XIV, 2nd edition, Paris & Avignon, 1771.

⁵ *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Paris, 1878.

⁶ CHANUT, Abbé, *Le saint concile de Trente*, Paris, 1683.

⁷ *Abrégé des Mémoires du clergé*.

⁸ *Code of Canon Law*.

⁹ SALM, L., *A Religious Institute in transition, The story of three General Chapters*, Romeoville, Illinois, 1992.

¹⁰ It does not say that it consists only of this: the personal life of the Brother is also an "integral part" of his consecration.

¹¹ *Brother in lay Religious Institutes*, Rome, 1991, p. 17f.

¹² *Representing Jesus Christ himself. Identity and Prayer*, January 1st 1990, p. 15. It is not possible, within the limits of the present article, to show how the identity of the Brother was understood in the course of Institute history. Some valuable research has been done in this area by Br Pedro Maria GIL in his *Tres Siglos de identidad lasaliana, La relacion mision-espiritualidad a lo largo de la historia FSC*, 1994, Rome, N° 4 in the series *Lasallian Studies*. All we can do is to refer the reader to this work.

¹³ The expression is that of M. Campos, CL 45,352f.

Complementary themes

Association
Brothers of the Ch. schools
Christian teacher
Community

Employment
Gratuity
Hearts (to touch)
Imitation of Christ

Obedience
School
Stability
State
Vows
World (relations with)

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Some idea of the great number and diversity of pious organisations set up by the Brothers in the course of the centuries and throughout the world can be gained from the series "Bulletin of the Institute of the FSC" and from District publications and from those of educational establishments and Former Students Associations.

A modern view which goes beyond the confines of the Lasallian Family can be gained from the excellent work of Gabriel Le Bras (who oversaw the work and wrote its preface): "Les Ordres religieux" (two illustrated 4to volumes, Paris, Flammarion, 1980). The section dealing with the La Salle Brothers is in vol. 2, pp. 710-736.

Br Yves POUTET and Br Alain HOURY

92. REWARD OF THE TEACHER

Summary

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1. THE SCOPE OF THE ARTICLE

1.1. Meaning of "reward"

Dictionaries published in the period in which the Founder lived agree by and large on the meaning of *recompense* (reward). The term comes originally from Latin (*cum pensare*, meaning "return" or "repetition"). The Trévoux dictionary (1721) gives the following definition: "Prize, salary, gift given to a person; benefit obtained from someone for services rendered or for some good action".

Generally speaking, the word indicates a sign of approval for a good action, but can mean also punish-

ment for a bad one. It means to pay for, to remunerate a service; to recompense a benefit received, a service, a virtue, merit. It is used also with the meaning of gift, bequest, prize, gratuity, pay, awarded for reasons of justice, generosity or public recognition. Rewards should match the value of the services rendered.

In Claude Augé's *Nouveau Larousse Illustré* (around 1920), *recompense* is given three meanings: 1. What a person receives as a recompense for success, a service, an action. 2. A happy consequence, compensation. "A good conscience is the reward of virtue". 3. Punishment for a bad action, by antiphrasis.

1.2. Historical background

Reward in the sense of remuneration is integral to the work of teachers. The salary of teachers in the 17th century was modest by our standards, given the multiplicity of their functions, often under the authority of a parish priest. Their salary came from three sources: the parish council, the parish priest (in particular for their work as sacristans), and fees from the parents of pupils who could afford them. Their remuneration increased in the 18th century, but remained modest all the same.¹

Some teachers were priests. Normally, education was not free. In each diocese there were so-called "little schools" which were the responsibility of the precentor, appointed by the bishop, who had the ultimate authority. Town councils, parishes, various communities, sometimes the cathedral chapter or an abbey, gave support to the little schools. There were also charity schools, opened by parish priests for the poor children of their parishes, which were completely free,² as also those founded by hospitals.

Opening a poor school was something of a gamble for most parish priests because, even if they were supported by private donors, they still had to pay the teachers. All the same, teaching was seen by many as one of the most praiseworthy ways of helping the poor and their children. In 1662, the bishop of Chalons (south of Rheims) wrote to his parish priests: "Withdraw each year a certain sum from parish funds to help pay for a teacher in places where there is none because of the poverty of the people there. If you yourselves can contribute something towards the maintenance of such a teacher, give priority to him rather than to other needs which are less necessary and urgent. In a word, do not fail to do all that your zeal is capable of to provide a teacher for your parishes".³

We see the same attitudes at work when De La Salle opened schools. He did so normally at the request of a bishop, a parish priest, a hospital or a *bureau* (group of donors).

In De La Salle's schools, the remuneration pro-

vided for the maintenance of the Brothers was stipulated in a written contract. We know, at least in substance, the terms of the contracts drawn up when schools were founded in Chartres, Calais, Mende, Ales, Rouen, etc. In spite of these, there were still disputes and occasionally contracts were broken. In this connection, S. Gallego writes as follows: "It is better to have peace than money. [...] Money will come from the Brothers' work. And if they are paid badly, others will try to make up what is wanting".⁴

On one point, however, the Founder remained intransigent: the gratuity. Schools directed by the Brothers took in the poor and the better-off without distinction and, as a consequence, without charging fees.

1.3. Use of the term in De La Salle's writings

In the *Lasallian Vocabulary*, the noun *récompense* (reward) occurs 83 times, and the verb *récompenser* (to reward) or *être récompensé* (to be rewarded), 27 times. It should be noted that, the 21 times that this word is used in the *Conduct of Schools*, it refers to the rewards given to pupils in school.

De La Salle speaks of reward as a motive for teachers in the exercise of their ministry. This motive will vary in character and depth from teacher to teacher. All rewards can be considered under the following headings:

- (a) who rewards? (God, Mary); (b) who is rewarded? (the Christian, the teacher, the saints); (c) what is rewarded? (zeal, persecution, the free gift); (d) what kind of reward is it? (earthly, heavenly, professional, spiritual, affective); (e) When will it be received? (in this life or in the next).

De La Salle's view is founded on his personal disinterestedness regarding the remuneration of his teachers for the work they do. The Christian Schools had to have guaranteed financial support from a parish or some other institution, so as to ensure the gratuity of the schools. It is in this context that the Founder invites his teachers to sublimate their commitment to the children they instruct and catechise.

2. THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL CONTEXT

De La Salle bases the reward of the teacher on the infinite goodness of God and on absolute trust in the one who, by his providence, showers his gifts on the messengers to whom he entrusts the mission of re-

vealing him to his dearest sons, the poor.

At the same time, we need to bear in mind the great realism of the Founder of the Brothers in this connection. He knew from personal experience the

difficulties and persecutions that the ecclesial mission entrusted to the teachers could entail, and yet he was still able to provide his teachers with motives to inspire them on a practical level, views to give meaning to the work they did in school, and the hope of being rewarded for it.

De La Salle borrowed the theme of "the glory of the teacher arriving in heaven" from the 10th meditation of Fr Giry. He enlarges on this theme in two triumphant *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (MR 207 & 208): "Those who instruct many persons in Christian justice will shine as stars for all eternity" (MR 208,2 quoting Dn 12,3).

2.1. In the hope of an eternal reward

The eschatological dimension of salvation history gives the MR their unity. It places them in the context of the New Testament and especially in that of St Paul's writings. The Kingdom of God envisaged by the Founder of the Brothers is built here and now through the transcendent mission of the Christian school.

Reward is the fruit of the faith and hope of the Christian. Salvation is the object of not only hope, but also of the experience of the love of Jesus made present by the Brothers. Faith includes hope (Rm 4,18). Like faith, hope is born from God's call (MR 208,2 quoting Ep 1,18) which does not deceive, because the Spirit makes possible the interior experience of the love of God. Hope is the pride of the Christian (Rm 5,2) and the source of his courage: "Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you" (Mt 6,18). Those who are separated from God have no hope of a reward (MR 199,3 quoting Ep 2,12).

MR 205-208 are entirely devoted to the eschatological view of the Brother's mission. The hope of an eternal reward sustains him and becomes a reality. His reward, in fact, will be to see the children in his charge with him in the eternal glory of God (MR 208,2). These children are his hope. The thought of heaven encourages him to take his ministry more seriously. His striving to attain the fulness of what is promised leads him to bear in mind the Last Judgment during the course of his daily activities (cf. AEP 79).

Christ's words provide us with a criterion for discerning what the 'true reward of the Christian really is: "When a man's doctrine is his own, he is hop-

ing to get honour for himself; but when he is working for the honour of the one who sent him, then he is sincere and by no means an imposter" (Jn 7,18). The double criterion Jesus gives in order to assess the value of his teaching can be transposed to the educator. The doctrine of Jesus is in the man himself (Jn 7,17). Whoever seeks human fulfilment — the accomplishment of God's plan — sees that the teaching of Jesus, which is freedom and life, proceeds from God. And the negative criterion — the pursuit of personal glory — proves that the teaching proposed does not come from God, but that it reflects an attempt to use God in view of one's own personal interest.

2.2. "Gratuitously and solely for the glory of God"

De La Salle requires the Christian teacher to be completely disinterested. This attitude is "the one which is most characteristic of Lasallian pedagogy". For De La Salle, teaching is an apostolate: the teacher is an apostle who "must give freely what he has received as a free gift" (ALCALDE, 134-140). Disinterestedness in the exercise of one's function is the sign of the true teacher. Gratuity is the trademark of the Christian school.

The apostle, however, "cannot disregard the reward he will receive for having devoted himself with ardent zeal to the conquest of souls. Reward is a necessary stimulus for man. Jesus Christ himself spoke of reward to encourage us to bear with the contradictions and sufferings of this life: 'Rejoice, therefore, [...] because your reward will be great in heaven'" (VIOLA, 175f, quoting Lk 21,28),

The approach one adopts to the question of the disinterestedness of the teacher or the gratuitous nature of his teaching will vary according to one's point of view. Nowadays this is a sensitive question. In 1649, Adrien Bourdoise expressed the wish to see "teachers who worked in this profession as perfect Christians, as apostles, without self-interest, and not as mercenaries who considered this profession as a wretched occupation invented for the purpose of having bread to eat".

The author of the *L'École paroissiale*, says much the same thing when he states that, as a rule, a teacher should be completely disinterested regarding remuneration for his teaching. Disinterestedness on the part

of the teacher, demonstrated by his refusal to accept any kind of remuneration from the pupil for the teaching and education he is given, is a principle that is rigorously applied in De La Salle's approach to edu-

cation. The "Christian and gratuitous schools" founded by De La Salle are intended primarily for poor children, and that is why teaching there is given "gratuitously and solely for the glory of God" (MR 194,1).

3. THE REWARD OF THE TEACHER IN THE PRESENT LIFE

3.1. God takes care of those he sends

The teacher, conscious that he is called to fulfil a specific mission, knows that God, as a good father, will provide for his material needs, since this is one of the necessary means if he is to accomplish his plan of salvation: "Set your hearts on his Kingdom first, and his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well" (Mt 6,33; cf. MD 67,3). De La Salle recalls that God, in his goodness, does not fail to reward those who give up everything to follow Christ, and who work with ardent zeal for the extension of his Kingdom (MR 207,1). De La Salle often expresses this conviction in his meditations: "You may rest assured that he will take care of you, provided that you serve him faithfully and omit nothing that he expects of you" (MD 59,3). Elsewhere, he asks the Brothers: "Have you then so little faith that you fear that, by fulfilling your duty, and giving all your attention to establishing God's reign in your hearts and in those of others, you will lack food and clothing?" (MD 67,2).

God does not allow himself to be outdone in generosity. In his providence, he takes care of those whom he chooses and sends to his vineyard. De La Salle concludes MD 67 by saying: "The more you abandon yourself to God with regard to temporal matters, the more he will take care to provide you with them" (MD 67,3 referring to Mt 6,25-33).

3.2. The rewarding nature of teaching

The work a teacher does can be a source of joy for him as well as being rewarding, and this can motivate him in his teaching. Kerschensteiner states that "the sole motive a teacher should have in his work is the education of the pupil and, through him, that of the group. [...] It is from the accomplishment of this task that the teacher derives his greatest pleasure" (quoted by ALCALDE, 140f). Seeing pupils develop their abilities and adopt worthwhile values is enough to make a teacher rejoice and feel fulfilled.

God is at the teacher's side in his educational work,

rewarding him with the "miracle" of being able to touch his pupils' hearts by his faith. As De La Salle says: "This is the purpose of your work" (MF 139,3).

Zeal is rewarded by certain success in educational work. "God will bless all you do zealously for his sake, and victory will be granted you over all those who oppose what you do for him" (MF 182,3).

3.3. The consolation of seeing the Kingdom of God proclaimed

One of the rewards a teacher obtains in this world is the knowledge that God is glorified by his apostolic work. For the true apostle, his greatest consolation is not the realisation that his intellectual and human work has not been sterile, and has led to the academic success of his pupils, in itself a very gratifying reward for any teacher, but rather seeing his efforts rewarded by some moral or spiritual fruit: "Another reward, even in this life, which those who work for the salvation of souls receive, is the consolation they have of seeing God served well by those they have taught, and of knowing that their work has not been useless, but has helped to save those they were called upon to instruct" (MR 207,2).

Taking his inspiration from St Paul, De La Salle states that the primary source of consolation, the highest reward, the greatest source of joy on achieving success in one's ministry, comes from the fact of "proclaiming the Gospel free of charge, without it costing anything for those who hear it" (MR 207,2 quoting 1 Co 9,18). Another source of consolation is the spiritual growth of the pupils: "You must consider also as a great reward the consolation you feel in the depths of your hearts when you see that the children you instruct behave properly, know their religion well, and are pious. Thank God with all your heart for all these rewards which he gives you in advance in this life" (MR 207,2). There is also joy which anticipates that of the life to come, when education is rewarded with spiritual success: "There is the very special satisfaction you will experience when they grow up and you

see them living a just and pious life" (MR 207,3).

The joy of the teacher will be complete when he sees that, "by the establishment of the schools, reli-

gion and the practice of the faith have increased among the faithful, and especially among the artisans and the poor" (MR 207,3).

4. THE REWARD OF THE TEACHER IN THE FUTURE LIFE

4.1. A hope and a requirement

The hope of the teacher is sustained by his belief in God's promise regarding the Day of Judgment and eternal life. This belief inspires the faith of the teacher who lives in the expectation of an affectionate and definitive welcome from the Father. The whole of MR 208 is a hymn of praise for the educational mission seen from this eschatological point of view. De La Salle speaks lyrically — something unusual for him — of eternal happiness: "What a consolation it will be for those who have procured the salvation of others to see a great number of them in heaven!". He goes on to quote the words of "the angel to the prophet Daniel: "Those who instruct many persons in Christian justice (sic), will shine like stars for all eternity"" (MR 208,2).

The ideal De La Salle proposes to his disciples is that "they should offer their lives willingly to God so as to win souls for God, who will enable them [the teachers] to reach a high place in heaven" (cf. MD 70,2) "Devote yourself, then, with zeal and affection to your work, since it will be one of the most helpful means to ensure your salvation" (MR 207,1).

4.2. God, the reward of the just

De La Salle speaks also of the teacher's encounter with God in heaven. He describes it as a series of surprises, not a dream, but many different kinds (not degrees) of glory.

The Brother has practised gratuity all his life. His purified vision makes him seek God as the greatest of his rewards. De La Salle's mysticism recalls that of St John of the Cross: "Your ministry requires you to teach children the science of salvation. [...] Do you acquit yourself of this duty solely with a view to procuring God's glory and the salvation of souls?" (MF 108,2). "What constitutes the life of the saints is their continual attention to God. This also should form the life of those who are consecrated to him, and who seek only to accomplish his holy will, to love him, and to make others love him. Hence, this is what your

sole occupation on earth should be, and towards this end all your efforts should tend" (MD 67,1).

The supreme reward is communion with God. De La Salle takes advantage of the feast of St Thomas Aquinas to encourage his Brothers to follow his example. Thomas "desired no other reward but God alone. [...] Declare solemnly to God that you wish to have no other view but this" (MF 108,2). Convinced that "the more completely you give yourself to God, the more God will do for you; and the less you are in the sight of men, the greater you will be before God" (MF 104,3).

4.3. The glory of the Christian teacher

De La Salle never tires of saying that God reserves a special reward for teachers of poor children.

4.3.1. INEFFABLE UNION WITH GOD

The gift that God reserves for the elect after their death consists essentially in union with himself. This is called also eternal life or the beatific vision, as De La Salle explains in his *Duties of a Christian* (CL 20,87 = DA 106,0,15). He speaks of it also in his meditations, as we shall see.

"The degree of this union will depend on the innocence, preserved or regained, presented to God" (GALLEGO, *Teología*, 277). Teachers will enjoy glory because, by their zeal and by acting as guardian angels, they collaborated in the building up of the Church, and because they helped a great number of their pupils to preserve or regain their "robes of innocence" (MR 208,3). These children will be our crown and our glory, the "halo of educators" (GALLEGO, *Id.*, 275). This will be a special kind of glory, whose intensity will depend on the extent to which one has provided pupils with a true and solid piety: "This should make you realise that your happiness in heaven will be greater than what will be enjoyed by those who have worked only for their own salvation. It will be much greater in proportion to the number of children you have taught and won over to God" (MR 208,1).

4.3.2. IN GLORY WITH ONE'S PUPILS

It is a rare thing to find De La Salle expressing himself as lyrically in his writings as he does when speaking of the joy of the teacher, on receiving the thanks of "his pupils, who are enjoying eternal happiness in heaven, as a result of his efforts. [...] How united in God they will all be! How happy they will be to speak together of the blessings they were promised when God called them, abundant glory and God's heritage in the dwelling of the saints" (MR 208,2 quoting Ep 1,18).

They will enjoy perfect happiness seeing and living with a great number of their pupils who also have attained eternal happiness. De La Salle speaks of "a great number" three times. He does so twice, to indicate those who have been saved, and once, referring to those who have regained their innocence (cf. GALLEGO, *Id.*, 278).

4.3.3. THE FINAL APOTHEOSIS

The eschatological consequences of "zeal for the instruction of children [...] in the fear of God" (RC

2,9) are proclaimed for all to hear. The work of the Christian teacher for the building up of the Church is fully revealed.

De La Salle describes in grandiose terms the scene at the Last Judgment, the eternal day which will never end. The spectacularly dramatic scene he describes for us enables us to imagine the successive stages of the marvellous encounter which will seal an eternal communion between teachers and pupils.⁶ "Then they [the children] will represent the good you have done among them [...] the trouble you took to put them back on the road to salvation; and they will all join in asking Jesus Christ to grant you a favourable judgment, praying him not to delay putting you in possession of the happiness you procured for them by your work and your concern" (MR 208,3).

At this point occurs what we can call the apotheosis of the teacher, in the presence of the entire court of heaven: "Oh, what glory there will be for those who have taught young people, when their zeal and their devotion to procure the salvation of children will be made public" (MR 208,3).

5. TRIALS, A SIGN OF THE KINGDOM

5.1. The Gospel paradox

The Founder knows from personal experience and from Jesus' warning in the Gospel, that the servant is not greater than his master, and that he too will have to undergo trials. The paradox we find in the Gospel is that, when persecution comes and there is danger of death, we should rejoice "because our reward will be great in heaven" (Lk 21,28).

When De La Salle invites us to share in the sentiments and sufferings of Christ, he means we should undertake a process of ongoing conversion and identification with Christ. "This christocentric view of mortification at last gives De La Salle's teaching a positive value: suffering is a means to attain life, it is not the pursuit of death" (AEP, 196).

Certain that the sufferings of this life bear no comparison with the future glory which will be revealed in us, De La Salle insists that good can come out of suffering and persecution, and reminds the Christian teacher that his work will lead inevitably to conflict with the worldly society it seeks to condemn and transform. "Do not be surprised, therefore, if you meet with

trials and opposition in the exercise of your ministry. The more you suffer, the more resolute you should be to acquit yourself conscientiously of your work. Rest assured that God will then shower his blessings upon you in abundance" (MF 126,2).

Elsewhere, De La Salle goes a step further in speaking of the joys of suffering persecution: "What a happiness it is to be able to suffer and die like this saint [James], for having laboured to win souls for God. This is the reward you have to expect for the care and work of your ministry" (MF 119,2).

5.2. The trials of the Christian teacher

While the trials of the teacher may not include the ultimate sacrifice of martyrdom, they can take more insidious forms: "Prepare to suffer insults, outrages and calumnies for the good you try to do to your neighbour. This is the chief reward that God allows in this world, and frequently it is the only one we receive from the poor for what we do for them. Dispose yourself to accept such things lovingly" (MF 120,3; cf. MF 162,3; 168,3; 182,2).

Such is the consequence of leading a life of conformity with Christ. Persecution is the normal "reward" for working in the apostolic ministry. This is what De La Salle and his first Brothers experienced.⁵ We have here a good illustration of the "spirit of martyrdom", typical of the 17th century.

Sufferings can purify us, make us grow in love, bring us closer to Christ. "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well" (Jn 15,20). This is the reward for the work of redemption accomplished for and in Christ; such is "the reward of saints and apostolic men, as also of Jesus Christ" (MF 155,3; cf. MF 162,1; AEP, 197). De La Salle challenges his Brothers with the example of the saints: "Such was the result of the zeal and preaching of this great saint [John the Baptist]. Is this the reward which you count upon for your labours?" (MF 162,3).

M. Sauvage and M. Campos consider that De La Salle's conformity with the suffering Christ must be seen in the broader context of his personal identification with the suffering Christ. They write: "De La Salle's view of suffering here, couched in mystical terms, seems to us more than ever positive. There is

no question of masochism here [...], for suffering is not sought for its own sake, but accepted as being an integral part of apostolic work" (AEP 198).

Persecution gives the Brother's work, as it were, a guarantee of authenticity. "Happy are you when people hate you [...] on account of the Son of Man [...] for then your reward will be great in heaven" (Lk 6,22). That is why De La Salle insists: "The more faithfully you adhere to God when you have occasion to suffer, the more will God pour his graces and blessings upon you in the exercise of your ministry" (MF 155,3).

5.3. Even unto death

Complete and authentic victory consists in the gift of life. We find an echo of the Gospel maxim "Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10,39), in De La Salle's meditation on St Denis: "The recompense usually bestowed upon apostolic men here below is persecution and death for the faith which they preach. [...] After having exhausted yourself in this noble work of your apostolate, expect no other recompense here below than to suffer and die, as Jesus Christ himself died, in the midst of pains and afflictions" (MF 175,3).

6. CONCLUSION: THE TEACHER COMPARED WITH THE SAINTS AND IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST

When De La Salle writes of the reward of the teacher he is not concerned with his legal and social status, nor with the finances involved in the running of a school. It would be pointless to look for such considerations either in his life or writings. However, as we have seen in this article, there existed already, in the period that concerns us, indications of the thinking that, in the course of two centuries, would change the social image and consequently the nature of the teaching profession.

De La Salle shows his disciples that the teacher working in a charity school — the lowest rank in the profession — was promised a very high reward by God. Here below, if he shares the lively faith of the holy

evangelisers and reforming bishops, who are given to him as models, his esteem for the work he does can satisfy his affective needs.

From the point of view of faith, the Lasallian teacher can be defined as one who brings the salvation announced by Jesus Christ to young people. To enable him to fulfil such a noble mission, De La Salle invites him to identify himself with Jesus, and to adopt as his own the sentiments and aims that were those of the prophet from Nazareth, when he was here on earth. In the meantime, he can expect to receive the same rewards as he did: in this world, alternating recognition and persecution from people around him; in the next, the happiness promised by God.

¹ Cf. *Lexique historique de la France d'Ancien Régime*, Paris, A. Colin, 1978.

² GALLEGO, S., *Vida...*, vol. II, 33-42 & 430f.

³ Quoted by BLAIN, CL 7,59.

⁴ GALLEGO, S., *Vida...*, vol. II, 277 & 431.

⁵ Cf. GALLEGO, S., *Teología...*, 287. The author analyses various aspects of the life of the Christian teacher. I am indebted to him, in particular, regarding what he says about the reward of the Christian teacher in his last chapter.

⁶ GALLEGO, S., *Teología...* The author borrows this evocative description from É. LETT, *Jubilum saeculare*, Compton, *pro manuscripto*, 1951, p. 278f.

Complementary themes

Abandonment
Christian teacher
Conversion
Education
Faith
God

Gratuity
Hearts (to touch)
Joy
Justice
Love - Charity
Mission

Renunciation
Saints
Salvation
School
Suffering
Teacher - Pupil
Zeal

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93. SCHOOL

Summary

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Numerous aspects of De La Salle's views on education have been examined already in a variety of articles written for the Lasallian Themes series. At the end of the present article, we give a list of 35 themes, each of which analyses some aspect or other of the way De La Salle's schools were run, or of relations between the persons involved. Such an analysis involves the use of internal evidence from the writings, life and work of the Founder. Rather than risk repeating what has already been said elsewhere, we thought it would be useful to look at Lasallian school in the French educational context of its time, so as to have a better grasp of its originality and novelty.

1. A WORD ABOUT VOCABULARY

1.1.18th century dictionaries

In French, the word *école* (school) has the disadvantage of signifying a variety of cultural and social phenomena. What can confuse the modern reader even more than this plurality of meaning is a distinction between:

- the generic meaning : all establishments seen as a single group, offering education at all levels, are called "school" (school system or network);
- and the restricted meaning : school refers to an establishment offering primary education (primary or elementary schools).

These two meanings existed already in the 17th century, as we can see from Pierre Richelet's dictionary (1709) which gives two definitions:

1. "Place where some aspect of knowledge is taught regularly: school of theology, Canon Law, medicine". This is the generic meaning.
2. "Little schools; place where a schoolmaster teaches little children to read and write. These little schools are also called simply schools without the addition of little. People say: to go to school, to run a school".

The *Grand Vocabulaire Français* (1767) treats the subject at greater length, devoting ten pages to the different accepted meanings and uses of the word "school", after defining this "feminine noun" as a "public place where the humanities and sciences are taught". The dictionary then goes on to give a very interesting history of schools, beginning before the Flood, and touching on the Old Testament, the first Christians

and the Middle Ages. One of the expressions it includes obviously refers to a current practice: "There is a common saying *faire l'école buissonnière* (to play truant), meaning to hide in order to avoid going to school, to miss school through ill-discipline". On page 549 of Volume 8 of this dictionary, we find the following remark about *the Christian and Charitable Schools of the Child Jesus*: "Refers to communities of men and women committed to the instruction of young people". The author names Fr Barré as the head of this institution, confusing the work of this founder with that of De La Salle: "Their main work is teaching gratuitously the poor children that come to them. They cannot teach elsewhere, nor can they accept any payment from the parents of the children they instruct. The Brothers are not allowed to accept girls in their schools, and the Sisters cannot accept boys. Both live in community, without making vows, under the direction of a superior whom they must obey. The Brothers' dress consists of a cassock and a cloak with hanging sleeves, both made of rough black material. The Sisters are dressed similarly to the Sisters of the Christian Union".

Finally, according to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française (Mil)*, "the name 'little schools' is given to those in which reading and writing are demonstrated and grammar is taught. When the word schoolmaster is used it refers to a teacher in one of these schools".

1.2. Modern dictionaries dealing with the 17th century

François Bluche, writing in the *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle*, recalls that the word school had many meanings in the 17th century. He speaks also of the term "little schools" which became common on account of the schools established in the vicinity of the Abbey of Port Royal, a famous Jansenist stronghold, between 1637 and 1660. These were little initially because of their limited intake: no more than five classes with six pupils in each. However, the term "little schools" was chosen in Port Royal through humility, despite the fact that their schools were part of an ambitious and elitist scheme. It produced a type of school that was a very influential model throughout the second half of the century.

The authors of the *Lexique historique de la France d'Ancien Régime* devote forty or so lines to the little schools. We include an extract: "Little schools: intended initially for catechising, teach also a basic

knowledge of the alphabet, reading, writing and arithmetic. [...] The foundation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by John Baptist de La Salle enabled 116 towns in France to have at their disposal in the 17th century high-quality teachers, who attracted a clientele drawn from a variety of social backgrounds, but mostly from among the working classes, and whose teaching methods were adapted to their pupils".

Finally, there is M. Marion's *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, which devotes seven columns to primary education. The article is full of detail and speaks of numerous educational undertakings due, in particular, to the efforts of the Church or individual members of the clergy.

1.3. Works on the history of education

Not wishing to swamp the reader with quotations, we will refer to only four works, which will be sufficient to give a clear overall picture of the educational scene in France before the Revolution of 1789.

M. Fosseyeux, as the title of his book indicates, is interested in the "charity schools" (*Les écoles de charité à Paris sous l'Ancien Régime et au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1912). He begins, therefore, by making the distinction between the little schools, the writing schools and the little classes of the *colleges*. We shall return to these distinctions later: they were important in the lifetime of the Founder and of the first Brothers.

Philippe Aries, in his *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, 1973 (*Centuries of Childhood*) writes: "In the 17th century, the curriculum of the little schools in towns consisted of the following subjects: reading, singing, politeness, writing and counting. In varying degrees, these same subjects were taught also in the rural little schools which sprung up in the 17th century" (French edition, p. 327).

"At school, as at home, reading was learnt from a book on politeness which, in the 17th century, was most often the one composed by J.B. de La Salle" (French edition, p. 328).

"However, the essential characteristic of the little schools in the 17th century, which distinguishes them from the road-side schools of the 16th century and those of the writing masters, lies less in their curriculum than in the age of their pupils. These are neither adults nor adolescents, but children between the ages of 7 and 12. In 1833, an inspector wrote — and what he said is valid for the preceding years and the 18th

century — "You can send children to school only when they are 7 or 8 years of age. [...] At 11 or 12, they are sent out to work".

Jean de Viguerie, author of *L'Institution des enfants*, wrote the following about the word school: "In everyday language, this generic term is used with reference to all traditional establishments originating in the Middle Ages. Universities and colleges are called the *grandes écoles* (literally, "big schools"). In them are taught Latin and advanced learning which is inaccessible without knowledge of Latin. In the *petites écoles* ("little schools"), children learn to read, write and count. In reality, there are three kinds of school. The university, the college and the little school are three institutions, differing in nature. They gave rise to the three sections in which our contemporary French education system is divided: advanced, secondary and elementary" (p. 101).

Bernard Groperrin, in *Les petites écoles sous l'Ancien Régime* (1984), begins with the definition of the little schools given in the *Dictionnaire de*

l'Académie of 1772 (cf. 1.1), and then adds the following: "Even though we need to add to this curriculum counting, catechism and morals, called politeness at the time, and even if it is unlikely that much grammar was taught, this curriculum was their area of expertise. And even if some historians make a distinction between the little schools that charged fees and the gratuitous schools, we shall treat them together because the teaching given in them was basically the same. But the difference between this type of teaching, intended for the working class, and what was taught in the colleges was enormous, because the former concentrated on basic subjects: learning to read, write, count, behave properly in society, and Christian doctrine.

"It was not like the teaching given in our modern primary schools, which is intended to be a preparation for the successive stages of education. Instead, its function was to provide the children of the lower classes with a level of knowledge considered necessary and sufficient for the position in society they would occupy" (p. 7).

2. SCHOOL IN THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

2.1. A constant concern

It was quite natural for De La Salle to use the word school to a lesser or greater extent in all his writings for the Brothers and for Christian teachers. As one might expect, this word occurs most frequently (334 times) in the *Conduct of Schools*. However, it is used also relatively frequently in the following works:

- The *Common Rules* (101 times): From the outset, these Rules included chapters concerned with school and the way Brothers should behave in it.
- The *Letters* (87 times): In many of his letters, De La Salle gave his correspondents advice regarding their work and their professional behaviour in school.
- The *Memoir on the Habit* (21 times): Despite the brevity of this text, in which De La Salle set out to define the identity of the "Society of the Christian Schools", as it proceeded to constitute itself.

If we wished to summarise what De La Salle said through his use (649 times) of the word school, the various articles submitted to the *Lasallian Themes* series (*Brothers, Teachers, Pupils, Parents, etc*) would provide us with the basic material we needed. However, it is not the frequency of the use of this word in connection with a particular concept that confers im-

portance on it: rather it is the pertinence of the thinking of the author and his reasons for choosing an institution called school for the education and evangelisation of the children of his times. It is true that society offered no alternative capable of providing the same service. We will limit ourselves to drawing attention to some points De La Salle particularly insisted upon in his writings.

2.2. In the "Conduct of Schools"

This work describes in concrete terms how the first Lasallian schools functioned. Its primary concern — even if the actual expression does not occur in the text — is that a school should be well run. Consequently, teachers are urged to consider their work as highly important and to accomplish it competently.

The preface outlines in general terms the aims of a school, whose teachers are:

- capable and well-trained,
- totally dedicated to their educational work,
- using methods and procedures well-tested by experience,
- aware of their responsibility to the pupils, their parents, society and the Church.

If these aims are to be achieved, it is essential to establish and maintain order in class. The second part of the work suggests practical means of doing so.

The expression *Christian schools* occurs 15 times, beginning with the title, recalling that the essential purpose of the institution is the formation of young Christians. The Lasallian school is based on an anthropological view from which is derived an integral approach to the education of children. It is interesting to go through the text of the CE and pick out the objectives of this human, professional, social and spiritual education of the child, and the means proposed to achieve it. One can also examine its historical context and study how such a school responded to the educational and pastoral needs of its clientele. In the present article, we cannot give a detailed description of the Lasallian school's response (inculturation?) to the needs of its times, but a careful reading of the text can at least provide some idea. This doubtlessly explains to a great extent the rapid and lasting success experienced by the Brothers' schools in France throughout the 18th century.

2.3. In the "Letters"

Many of the passages in the *Letters* in which the word school is used are of no particular interest. But it is worth looking more carefully at those which insist on the efficient running of schools and the order that has to be maintained in them so that they "are well run" (LA 16, 34, 35, 47, 49, 55, 57, 58; LC 75, 102).

An analysis of these letters shows that De La Salle is concerned about two things: he wants the schools to be run as well as possible, and the Brothers who teach in them to be totally committed to this task.

A short postscript to a letter to Gabriel Drolin in Rome (LA 16) shows the Founder's desire to create first class schools. He asks Drolin to collect and send to him as much information as he can about the *Pious Schools* founded by Joseph Calasanz, in case he can pick up some good ideas from them.

2.4. In the "Meditations for Feasts"

De La Salle makes use of some of these *Meditations* to impress up on his Brothers the importance of schools and the eminence of their ministry, by referring to the example of various saints, as for example, Thomas Aquinas (MF 108), Peter, Martyr (MF 117), Margaret of Scotland (MF 133), Cajetan (MF 153), Cassian (MF 154) and Hilarion (MF 180).

However, the three most interesting meditations are those for the feast of St Louis, King of France (MF 160), and those for December 30th and 31st (MF 91 & 92), in which the Founder invites the Brothers to examine their conduct during the past year with regard to their work and their pupils.

2.5. In the "Meditations for the Time of Retreat"

Even if the word school does not occur often, it is clear that these 16 meditations and the foreword to the first edition are centred on the school, the place in which, in practice, the apostolic ministry of education was carried out. A careful reading of the MR, understood in its historical context, makes it clear why the school was the place *par excellence* for the human education, the socio-professional advancement and the evangelisation of "the children of the artisans and the poor".

2.6. In the "Memoir on the Habit"

In this text, the frequent use of the word school is easily explained by De La Salle's wish to define for outsiders the identity of the "Community of the Christian Schools", whose purpose, he said, was "to run schools gratuitously".

This text stresses a number of important points:

- the training given to country teachers (§ 4);
- the lifestyle and work of the Brothers (§ 10,14, 15, 17, 31,32, 34, 47, 52, 63 & 64).

The observations regarding the habit, important as they were in their contemporary socio-cultural context, perhaps are of more interest to us today as a comment on the professional and religious significance of the lives of the Brothers, as well as on their function as educators.

2.7. In the 1718 "Common Rules"

Forty years after the first schools were founded, one can say, without minimising the value of the previous *Regulations* and *Rules*, that the 1718 text contains the definitive codification of the thinking already present in the *Memoir on the Habit*. It is not surprising, therefore, that a parallel reading of the two texts reveals similarities.

By comparison with the present *Rule of the Brothers*, the 1718 text clearly gives more space to school

matters. It was a way, among others, of showing that there was no distinction between their vocation as Brothers and their work, Six of the first eleven chap-

ters deal with the purpose of the school, school work, and the attitudes and behaviour of the Brothers as teachers.

3. THE EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENT IN 17th CENTURY FRANCE

The end of the Middle Ages saw the foundation and growth of universities all over Catholic Europe. In the 16th century, there appeared the colleges, the equivalent of modern secondary schools. The influence of the Jesuits was decisive in this area from the middle of the century onwards. They were soon followed by the Fathers of the Christian Doctrine and the Oratorians.

However, both of these establishments, that is, universities and colleges, were intended for well-off people. This was not for financial reasons, for gratuity existed in both of them, but because of the cultural traditions of the families involved and the abundant use of Latin.

While the nobility and the middle class pursued their education, the common people remained for the most part illiterate. The curriculum, the conditions in which students studied, the use of Latin, the length of time spent on studies, all represented a form of education that was not suited to the needs of the common people who, in any case, did not have the means to benefit from it.

3.1. The rise of the "little schools"

A number of factors came together at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century which made possible the creation and, later, the proliferation of schools for the common people. There was a sort of sudden awareness everywhere of the need to educate the common people, initially, it would seem, for religious and political reasons - to control and catechise them and to teach them moral values. We shall limit ourselves to mentioning briefly some of the factors historians of education have brought to light, and which will explain the rise of popular education.

1. The influence of the Catholic and Protestant Churches was decisive. It was a time of competition, of stimulating rivalry, and both Churches wanted to catechise the masses. At the beginning of the 16th century, the leaders of the Reformation showed great interest in the school as a means of educating children and of introducing people to the private reading of the Bible. A little later, the Council of Trent urged the leaders of the Catholic Church to catechise the masses by means of the school.

2. In France, in the 17th century, the Catholic Church received the support of the monarchy in its task of educating the masses. The necessary decrees were passed, even though the resources to implement them were lacking.

3. This movement to educate the masses was supported, at least indirectly, by a humanist trend with its noble and optimistic ideals of personal freedom inspired by the Renaissance.

4. Support came also from individuals, priests and lay persons, normally from the middle classes, who belonged to societies, associations or *bureaux*. Religious congregations, mostly of women, were founded for the purpose of devoting themselves entirely or in part to education. Some of these were bound by the rules of monastic life.

5. Not wishing to be left behind, local civil administrations (municipal and provincial), which were in the process of reorganisation as a result of royal pressure, but which still enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, wished in their turn to open schools in their areas of jurisdiction, especially in the south part of the country where there were fewer schools.

6. All these plans and successful undertakings depended greatly on printing, whose expansion all over Europe provided the necessary means for the overall spread of education. The spread of printed material, in particular by peddlers, awoke in an increasing number of people, even from the working classes, the desire to read and even to write. The school seemed the obvious place of assuaging this thirst for literacy.

3.2. Difficulties and developments

These generous intentions, quite naturally, came up against the constraints of reality: lack of material resources, use of unsuitable premises, lack of trained teachers, economic factors forcing families to make their children work, etc.

Despite all this, the proliferation of the little schools was quite remarkable, especially in the second half of the 17th century. These schools for boys and girls, were inspired and organised by a number of famous precursors: Pierre Fourier, Francois de Sales, Vincent de Paul, Jacques de Batencour, Charles Démia, Nicolas Barré, Nicolas Roland, Charles Tabourin, founder of a community of men in Paris, the little schools of Port Royal and the influence of Cesar de

Bus through the expansion of the Ursulines.

This educational movement had opponents. There was a fear that education would emancipate the masses to such an extent that they would disturb the social order and deprive the economy of a submissive and cheap working force. However, it was an irreversible trend, because of the increasing demand of the masses for education, and because it was urged on by the joint efforts of the Church and State to bring about the acculturation of the masses.

3.3. Dynamism and diversity

This movement was in full spate when, in 1679, John Baptist de La Salle and Adrien Nyel became increasingly involved in Rheims in the work of free schools for poor boys.

A work published in 1678 by Claude Joly, a priest who was in charge of the little schools of the diocese of Paris, gives an idea of the diversity of the schemes undertaken in towns. Of the various kinds of school that existed, three in particular are worthy of attention : the little schools, the charity schools and the schools run by the writing masters. De La Salle had dealings with these institutions and had to choose one of them as the legal framework within which to found his own work, the *Christian and Gratuitous Schools*.

Other schools, brought into existence by private initiative, lasted only a short while because they were too closely associated with their founders. Nowadays, they have anecdotal value, but they do bear witness to the creativity of the times.

3.4. Shortcomings and limitations

In the 17th century as nowadays, the quality of

schools must have varied from place to place. We should hesitate, therefore, to be over hasty in making generalisations about the shortcomings, or the qualities, for that matter, that historians point out. At the same time, it is true that teachers often had to take on the role of pioneers, that is, to train themselves with whatever means were at hand, which explains their inadequacies.

1. Regarding the pupils themselves, we should bear in mind the following facts: the mixture of ages in class, the frequent separation of poor children from those from better families, frequent disorder and absenteeism leading to harsh discipline and corporal punishment. These circumstances were born of ignorance of child psychology and a pessimistic ideology evolved over the centuries based on the weakness and vicious tendencies observed in children.

2. Faced with this school population, which had received little or no education at home, the teachers found themselves ill-prepared. They were obliged to accept precarious contracts, which included non-teaching responsibilities, for salaries that failed to motivate them, and they worked in isolation. There were some exceptions, as in Lyon, thanks to Charles Démiá.

3. Because of the lack of experience, the organizational side of schools left much to be desired regarding curriculum, timetabling, teaching standards, composition of classes, etc.

4. Teachers were ill-educated and often could provide pupils only with courses in reading and catechism. They followed traditional practices, using Latin and teaching reading individually to pupils. The result was much waste of time and disorder in class.

For these reasons, schools for working class children, at the end of the 17th century, needed a great deal of reorganisation. De La Salle and the first Brothers were able to contribute greatly to this process.

4. THE CONTRIBUTION OF DE LA SALLE'S SCHOOLS IN HIS DAYS

We know that De La Salle restricted his work exclusively to towns. Even before 1679, he observed how town schools functioned in Rheims and especially in Paris. He must have noticed both the good points and the bad, otherwise it would be difficult to explain why he wanted to set up a new kind of institution. The same conclusion was drawn by his first biographers. The first name chosen, *Christian and Gratuitous Schools*, shows clearly that his basic criterion was gratuity. His point of reference was provided by the charity schools which, under the direction of the

parish priest, took in children whose parents figured on the parish register of poor people. This register was established by the Church in order to rationalise the provision of help to those in need. As opposed to fee-paying schools — the little schools and those of the writing masters — charity schools were required to meet established criteria regarding their intake and the teaching they gave. It is clear from the unpleasant dealings De La Salle had in Paris with the teachers of the little schools and their diocesan supervisor, Claude Joly, and later, with the writing masters and their guild,

and from the court cases that followed, that the Brothers' schools did not respect the established rules.

The Brothers' schools insisted on gratuity — it was considered essential (RC 7,1) — but, at the same time, they opened their doors to a varied clientele and provided courses which encroached upon the monopoly of the writing masters. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Lasallian approach to education was ambitious in its aims, content, methods and organisation. It was this that led the Founder and the Brothers to undertake a long period of experimentation, referred to in the preface to the *Conduct of Schools*, and whose objectives are described in the body of the work. This experimentation was in the following areas:

- the setting up of simultaneous teaching without losing the benefits of tailoring the course to the needs of the individual child;
- replacing learning to read Latin by learning to read French;
- offering practical courses to prepare pupils for the

"writing profession" (office work). At the end of their schooling, the best pupils could expect to enter this profession;

- ensuring that the learning process progressed according to precise and strictly controlled stages, by dividing up the pupils according to "classes", "lessons" and "orders";
- giving periodical attainment tests;
- choosing school materials and furniture suited to the work and needs of the pupils;
- organising school life more strictly for the sake of better discipline and efficiency.

However, the task to which De La Salle directed most of his efforts for 40 or so years of his life was the training of teachers and the provision of follow-up. His greatest inspiration was to break down the isolation of individual teachers so as to make them work "together and by association" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,3), and to offer them a permanent framework, which provided them with mutual encouragement, human, professional and spiritual enrichment, and stimulated creativity.

5. LASALLIAN SCHOOLS: THE VERDICT OF HISTORY

Because of the high quality of the first Brothers' schools and of their subsequent contribution, it is impossible to speak of the history of schools in France without referring to them. Several of the works listed in the bibliography speak of them at shorter or greater length and not always as pertinently as one might wish. We offer a number of judgments made at different points in history, which will give some idea of how these schools were seen as the years wore on.

Lasallian schools spread rapidly during the 18th century. As they did so, they experienced a certain amount of opposition, the most surprising of which came from some "philosophers" of the Age of Enlightenment who, it must be added had some very noble theories about human liberty. La Chalotais is an example often quoted. He writes in his *Essai d'éducation nationale*: "The Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, known as the ignoramus Brothers, have come along and ended up by destroying everything. They teach reading and writing to people, who should have learnt only to draw and to handle a file or a plane, but who now no longer want to do so".

Voltaire wrote to his friend La Chalotais regarding his *Essai*: "I cannot thank you enough for giving me a foretaste of what you intend to offer France. [...]"

I find all yours views useful. I thank you for condemning the idea that farm labourers should study. As one who cultivates the land, I ask you for unskilled labourers and not scholars. Send me, in particular, ignoramus Brothers to guide my ploughs and to pull them" (Letter dated February 28th 1763).

At a later date, he writes: "It seems to me essential that there should be ignorant beggars. It is not unskilled labourers that need to be instructed, but the middle classes. Once the common people start using their heads, all is lost" (Letter dated August 1st 1766).

By suppressing religious congregations and taking away responsibility for education from the Church, the French Revolution threw the whole school system of the country into confusion, including the network of Brothers' schools that had developed during the 18th century.

At the beginning of the 19th century, under Napoleon 1st, the system had to be rebuilt. Chaptal, the Minister of the Interior, presented a report to the Council of State, in which we read: "Before the Revolution, there were primary schools almost everywhere. Parents chose teachers and paid their salaries. [...] In towns, the schools were normally run by the ignoramus Brothers, an admirable institution, whose mem-

bers were always known for their ability to teach and their very strict morals. Doubtlessly, all this has disappeared, but it is easy to put everything back in place and make improvements".

In the presence of this same Council of State, Napoleon himself declared on May 11th 1806: "I cannot understand the kind of fanaticism that inspires some people against the Brothers. It is nothing less than prejudice. Everywhere there are calls for their return. This widespread appeal demonstrates sufficiently their usefulness".

Some 20 years later, the Minister of Public Instruction, wishing to reorganise primary education in France, considered it wise to consult leading citizens regarding the kind of schools the population wanted. Here are the answers he received from some départements:

Hie et Vilaine: "Public instruction is almost non-existent in the whole of France because people have chosen to move away from practices which had been proved by experience. The question of divinity or of the basis of morality does not come into it. We think, therefore, that things ought to return to where they were before".

Pas de Calais: "Young people have been abandoned to the utmost ignorance and the most alarming dissoluteness. Vandalism has left hardly any school buildings standing. Most primary school teachers are unsuitable or incompetent. The instruction of children of both sexes

should be entrusted once again to the ignoramus Brothers and the Daughters of Charity and of Providence". *Aude:* "Re-establish the Brothers of the Christian Schools under the name of Brothers of Public Instruction and entrust primary education to them". *Cote d'Or:* "The Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, the Ursulines, etc. are missed" (quoted in *Histoire générale de l'Enseignement et de l'Education en France*, vol. 3, p. 60).

We end with two opinions that are more recent. In *Les Instituteurs* (Delarge, 1980), J. Vial write:

"In 1720, one year after the death of the founder, the *Conduct of Schools* was published and, as late as 1940, it was still being reprinted. It is a very complete pedagogical manual, defining with meticulous pertinence not only the curricula and teaching methods of the little schools, but also the attitude of the teachers, so humble and gentle, so stubborn and conquering. Just like John Baptist de La Salle himself" (p. 28).

In a work entitled *L'Ecole primaire française* (P.U.L., 1980), Guy Vincent justifies as follows his choice of Lasallian schools as the basis for his analysis:

"We will stay principally with the school of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for several reasons: it represents the culminating point of a process of transformation, and develops what was still taking shape (with Pierre Fourier, the Sisters of Notre Darne, Charles Démia, etc.) to such a peak of perfection that it served as a model for at least two centuries" (p. 20).

Complementary theme

Artisans
Association
Brothers of the Christian Schools
Catechism
Child-Pupil-Disciple
Christian
Christian teacher
Conduct
Conduct of the Christian Schools
Correction
Decorum and Christian Civility

Disciples
Education
Employment
Example - Edification
Exercises
Formation
Gentleness
God's work
Goodness - Tenderness
Gratuity
Guardian angels

Hearts (to touch)
Hymns
Instruction
Ministry - Minister
Parents of the pupils
Poor
Reading in French
Reflection
Reward of the teacher
Teacher-pupil relation
Vigilance
Virtues of a teacher
Zeal

BIBLIOGRAPHY: See the article on *CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS*

Br Leon LAURAIRE

94. SIN

Summary

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2. Man and his tendency to sin

2.1.The Jansenist view 2.2.The teachings of De La Salle.

3. Through Jesus Christ, God frees us from sin

3.1.Reparation and pardon 3.2.Covenant and reconciliation.

4. Human effort in the struggle against sin

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After "God" and before "Jesus Christ", the noun "sin" is the one that occurs most frequently in the "Lasallian Vocabulary ". This observation, however, should not be understood as a value judgment. It is not a sufficient reason for calling De La Salle a pessimist: he, after all, taught that "God has not abandoned man to his sin" (CL 20,24 = DA 104,1,1).

If the present article begins by bringing us face to face with man and his sin, that is, with his bad relationship with God, it goes on to remind us that "Jesus Christ has fully and more than sufficiently satisfied for our sins" (CL 20,272 = DA 305,4,4).

I. SIN AND SINS

1.1. Original sin

At the end of a long period of religious turmoil, the Council of Trent defined a number of aspects of the Christian faith which were in dispute at the time.

Among these were sin and original sin: "The first man, Adam, having transgressed God's commandment in paradise, immediately lost his holiness and the state

of justice in which he had been created. By committing this sin, he incurred the anger and indignation of God and, as a consequence, the death with which God had previously threatened him" (session V, decree, art. 1).

The Vatican II Council, in its turn, declared: "Although he was made by God in a state of holiness, from the very dawn of history man abused his liberty,

at the urging of personified evil. Man set himself against God and sought to find fulfilment apart from God" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 13). And in its Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, it stated: "Affected by original sin, men have frequently fallen into multiple errors concerning the true God, the nature of man, and the principles of the moral law. The result has been the corruption of morals and human institutions and not rarely contempt for the human person himself (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 7).

These statements clearly reflect those of the Council of Trent, which stated that "an original sin, which is a sin properly so-called, is transmitted to all man because they are all sons of Adam. This sin is forgiven by baptism. Concupiscence after baptism is not a sin properly so-called".¹

When De La Salle defines original sin in his catechism by questions and answers, he bases his doctrine on the teachings of the Council of Trent: "Original sin is the sin we are born with and of which we became guilty through Adam's disobedience" (CL 21,122 = DB 2,14,1). In the *Duties of a Christian* (in continuous prose) he enlarges upon his subject: "Original sin is the sin we have contracted from Adam, who was the first man, and of which we have been made guilty by his disobedience. It is called original sin because it comes from Adam from whom we take our origin, because we are born with it, and are even infected by it the very moment we are conceived in our mother's womb. From that moment onwards, we are enemies of God, children of his anger, in the power of the Devil and under his tyranny, and condemned to eternal damnation" (CL 20,163 = DA 213,0,5).

1.2. Actual sin

When De La Salle speaks of actual sin, the sins we ourselves commit, he once again follows closely the teachings of the Council of Trent: "Actual sin is the sin we ourselves commit of our own free will once we are able to use our reason" (CL 20,164 = DA 213,0,8). The words used by De La Salle show clearly the distinction between "actual" and "original". The definition can be made even more precise: "Sin is a thought, a word, an action or something we omit to do, against the commandments of God or the Church, or, in a word, it is an act of disobedience towards God".²

We must have the use of our reason, the capacity to use our will and the freedom to make decisions, for

sins to be imputable to us. This insistence on the necessary conditions for sin is opposed to the teachings of Baius,³ a distant precursor of Jansenism, who considered the very inclination to evil or concupiscence to be a sin.

De La Salle is careful to emphasise the distinction: "This sin [original] creates in us a very great weakness when it comes to doing good, and a very great inclination to do evil. This is known as the concupiscence of the flesh, or the old man. It is the source of all the impulses and disordered desires that are in us, and which lead us, sometimes without our being aware of it, to love creatures and to enjoy sensual things and pleasures. This concupiscence is born and dies with us: it never leaves us. Even the saints who have the greatest horror for it and avoid it at all costs, are not exempt from it. God does not take it away from them in order to test them by the combats they have to fight and which it wages constantly against them. It serves also to make us aware of God's goodness towards us, and the strength of his grace, which helps us to overcome effectively all the obstacles to our salvation that this enemy of ours creates in us" (CL 20,164 = DA 213,0,7). De La Salle considered it important to establish that the inclination to evil is not a sin in itself, but only a propensity for acting sinfully.

We can fall into sin through weakness, through ignorance or through malice: through weakness, when we are unable to resist the strength of our concupiscence; through ignorance, when we have not gone to the trouble of finding out whether a thing is wrong or not; and through malice, if we commit a sin "deliberately [...] solely through bad will, or through a habit we have neglected and continue to neglect to correct" (CL 20,163 = DA 213,0,4).

1.3. Mortal sin

Whatever the reasons that lead us to disobey God, the sin that results is called mortal or venial, depending on the gravity of the matter, the degree of reflection, and the lesser or greater consent of the will. Mortal sin brings with it serious consequences for the spiritual life of the soul. By this sin, "a soul cannot actually die, because, being immortal, it cannot lose its natural life, which is of its very nature, but it can lose its spiritual life, which consists in the possession of grace and in union with God through his holy love" (CL 20,165 = DA 213,0,9).

De La Salle does not fail to insist on the "dire consequences" of mortal sin, which "makes us the enemies of God by depriving us of his holy love, which drives out the Holy Spirit from our hearts, which are his living temples, which puts us on a lower level than the animals, and which makes us slaves of the devil and of our passions" (*id.*). It must not be forgotten that all these devastating consequences may ultimately lead to the most terrible of all. The catechism asks the question: "What punishment does one suffer for having committed a mortal sin?" and provides the following answer: "When one dies in this state, one never sees God, and one burns eternally in hell. This is called being damned" (CL 21,123 = DB 2,14,5).

1.4. Venial sin

The concept of venial sin moderates somewhat what has been said about actual sin so far. "It is called venial, because God, who has great love for man, forgives it in the next life if a person dies in the state of grace, and forgives⁴ it easily also in this life, on condition we make up for it by some exercise of piety" (CL 20,165 = DA 213,0,10). The effects of venial sin are less devastating for the soul of the sinner: "It does not remove all grace from our soul, but it diminishes and weakens the love of God in us. It makes us lax in his service and insensibly disposes us to commit mortal sin" (*id.*). Venial sin cannot lead to eternal damnation, but as the traditional saying, adopted by De La Salle, declares, "it would be better for the whole world to be destroyed than to commit even one" (CL 20,166 = DA 213,0,10).

When De La Salle comes to speak of satisfaction for sin, he recalls that venial sin is not always a "light offence". He says: "God has often punished venial sins by severe chastisements and, sometimes, even by death. We have examples⁵ of this in the Holy Scriptures, as in the death of Lot's wife and in the death of Oza" (*id.*).

Without naming him, De La Salle uses a text from St Augustine to establish the difference between mortal and venial sin: "The basic difference that exists between mortal sin and venial sin is that, in mortal sin

one loves the creature more than God, whereas in venial sin, although one does not love the creature more than God, one loves it in a way in which one should not love it".⁶

1.5. Other categories⁷

Traditionally there are 7 capital sins: pride, avarice, lust, envy, gluttony, anger and sloth. As De La Salle says, "they are the source of many others", and that is why they are called "capital", that is, at the head or source of the others (CL 20,167 = DA 214).

A second category consists of sins "said to be against the Holy Spirit". They are called also "sins that cannot be forgiven. [...] To sin against the Holy Spirit is to reject and scorn some good thought that can prevent us from offending God" (CL 21,127 = DB 2,15,6). The list given in *the Duties* in continuous prose is the most explicit: "We sin against the Holy Spirit [1°] when we resist the graces the Holy Spirit offers us to save ourselves, or when we misuse them, but [2°] especially when we presume so much on the mercy of God and the forgiveness of our sins that, without taking the trouble to work at our salvation or use the means that God offers us in order to procure it, we nevertheless expect to be numbered among the Elect, and to receive in a moment, at the hour of our death, the grace of a true conversion. We sin also [3°] when we despair of being saved and of obtaining eternal life because of some enormous sin we have committed; [4°] when we disregard a truth although we know it; [5°] when we persist in sinning; [6°] when we remain impenitent, sinning continually without really wanting to be truly converted to God. We sin against the Holy Spirit also when [7°] we envy our neighbour because of the graces he receives from God, because, when we are displeased when he communicates himself, we insult the Holy Spirit" (CL 20,181 = DA 215,0,2-3).⁸

A third category consists of "sins that cry out for vengeance to God". De La Salle mentions four of these: 1. Killing someone voluntarily; 2. Oppressing the poor, widows and orphans; 3. Keeping back unjustly the wages of servants and workers; 4. The sin of sodomy (CL 21,126 = DB 2,15,5).

2. MAN AND HIS TENDENCY TO SIN

2.1. The Jansenist view

French theology in the 17th century is strongly influenced by the Jansenist movement which exaggerated certain aspects of the thinking of St Augustine to the point that they became heretical and incurred the condemnation of the Church.

According to Jansenius, "fallen man, left to himself, cannot avoid sinning because his will, no longer being free, is incapable of resisting concupiscence. On this account, all his impulses, even the most irresistible ones, are sinful. It is not true that sin exists only when it is possible to avoid it".⁹ According to him, man is torn between "terrestrial delectation or concupiscence, and heavenly delectation or grace. In the conflict that exists between the two, sin occurs when terrestrial delectation gains the upper hand. When heavenly delectation wins it is a victory. [...] When we act well, it is God alone who performs the good works without any cooperation on our part. As for evil, it is the consequence of our fallen nature and it is always imputable to us".¹⁰

Jansenism, therefore, tended to deny freedom: man was the plaything of his inclinations and his will played no part.¹¹ There developed a so-called humanist reaction to this thinking, which was more optimistic regarding the capacity of man helped by grace. The exponents of this reaction included masters of the spiritual life such as Francis de Sales, and theologians such as Julien Hayneufve and Jean Crasset, from whom De La Salle borrowed a certain amount of material.

2.2. The teachings of De La Salle

It is clear that De La Salle was influenced by St Augustine. His view of his fellowmen is severe: "Man is so inclined by his nature to sin that his sole pleasure seems to consist in committing it. [...] Children, whose minds are not yet developed and who as yet are unable to reason seriously or to any extent, seem to be inclined solely to gratify their passions and their senses,

and to satisfy their nature" (MR 203,2). He recognises the power of habit when it takes over the human will and imposes its laws. The child "who has become used to sin, has, in a certain sense, lost his freedom and has enslaved himself and made himself unhappy. [...] Bad habits [...] maintained over a long period of time normally become second nature" (*id.*).

Likewise, De La Salle believes that man, left to himself, can find himself at the mercy of dark forces which lead him to sin, being a victim of "those impulses which imperceptibly involve him in wrongdoing [...] unless he is faithful and prompt to resist them".¹² Man can control these impulses, called concupiscence,¹³ with the help of God's grace and courageous asceticism.¹⁴ De La Salle writes: "It is a characteristic of man to sin" (CL 17,183 = 13,9,1), that is, it is part of his fallen nature to sin.

In another statement, De La Salle makes no effort to spare the blushes of Adam's descendants: "It seems that there is nothing we are more inclined to do than to offend God" (CL 17,187 = I 3,13,1). This statement, despite its uncompromising tone, is not Jansenistic. In the context in which it occurs, De La Salle emphasises at the same time the major role played by divine grace which is given to everyone. The context is that of a prayer "to ask God to weaken concupiscence": "You know, O my God, that original sin has given us such an inclination to sin that it seems as if there is nothing we are more inclined to do than to offend you. It is only the power of your grace that can weaken in us this wretched concupiscence. Grant me this grace, therefore, O my God, and make it so effective that I no longer feel in myself these impulses which imperceptibly involve me in wrongdoing, [...] or at least do not allow me to be so wretched as to give in to them" (*id.*).¹⁵

It is not enough, however, to obtain grace. We all have the duty to avoid occasions which lead to sin and, as we shall see later, to continue to work at our own conversion.

3. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, GOD FREES US FROM SIN

3.1. Reparation and pardon

The whole of De La Salle's doctrinal teaching is centred around the incarnation of the Divine Word for

the salvation of mankind, and it is this that tempers his pessimism regarding human nature and its propensity to sin. God loves his creatures even in their

fallen state, and he can cure them, not by taking away their freedom, but by appealing to them to cooperate. God, in his mercy, has not allowed man to be irremediably lost, neither on account of Adam's sin, nor because of his personal sins. Instead, he has made it possible for him to obtain forgiveness. When a person asks for forgiveness, he obtains it by virtue of the merits that Jesus Christ acquired for him by the mystery of his life and by his death on the cross.

"Jesus Christ came down to earth only for the purpose of bringing about¹⁶ the salvation of all mankind" (MD 25,1). As the adopted son of God, man has the means not to remain in a state of sin, and to avoid eternal condemnation, which only his own stubbornness could cause. By grace, his sins can be wiped out in the eyes of God, but it remains for him to make reparation for the wrong he has done to his neighbour. This reparation is necessary for the complete forgiveness of sins, such as theft, scandal, slander, calumny, etc. De La Salle refers to this when dealing with confession (CL 17,167 = 12,9,6).

In connection with reparation, De La Salle speaks of "medicinal" penances both in the school context, and in confession. He writes in the following prayer: "Inspire my confessor to give me a medicinal penance, that is, one that can help me to avoid sin, and give me the means not to fall into it again" (CL 17,206 = I 3,30,2).

God, who, in his mercy, redeemed us through Jesus Christ, is always ready to grant us pardon if, like

the Prodigal Son of the Gospel, we are sorry for our sins and, having confessed them, ask forgiveness. De La Salle insists on the inexhaustible mercy of God, and goes so far as to say: "It seems to me, nevertheless, O my God, that you have more affection and a greater desire to forgive me than I have to offend you, you who are so full of goodness, and I who am so full of malice" (CL 17,202 = I 3,27,1).

3.2. Covenant and reconciliation

The greatest joy on seeing one's sins wiped out is the knowledge that one has regained the state of grace and renewed the covenant established with God by baptism. De La Salle asks his teachers to explain this to their pupils: "You must enter into the sentiments of Elias and say to them: I am so zealous for the glory of my God, that I cannot accept that you renounce the covenant you made with him in baptism, nor the status of children of God which you received by it" (MR 202,1,2; cf. 1 Rm 19,14).

He says the same thing when he suggests acts for recitation after confession: "I thank you for the goodness you have had in reconciling me with you. [...] You have clothed me once more with the robe of innocence with which you covered me and honoured me in holy baptism. [...] You have restored the right I had to be your heir" (CL 17,210 = I 3,34,1): "You have restored me to the bosom of the Church in which I was no more than a dead member" (CL 17,211 = I 3,35,2).

4. HUMAN EFFORT IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN

4.1. Reasons and means

Sin takes away from man his dignity as a son of God, and makes him a rebellious child. It is an offence against God. It can cause man to suffer the misfortune of being deprived of salvation and of the beatific vision. These are some reasons for fighting against sin and for obtaining God's forgiveness.

De La Salle never tires of repeating that "sin is the greatest evil that can befall this world, because it offends God who is infinitely and supremely good; because it is the cause of all the evils that we can possibly suffer in this world, and because it deserves all the punishments imaginable. These are reasons why

we should avoid it more than the plague, death and hell" (CL 20,162 = DA 213,0,2).¹⁷

One of the arguments he puts forward in his catechism for avoiding sin seems tailor-made for the majority of the children in his schools. To the question: "Is sin a greater evil than illness or poverty?" he gives the answer: "Yes, it is a much greater evil, because illness and poverty do not prevent us from being saved and going to heaven, whereas we cannot be saved and go to heaven with a sin however small".¹⁸

Regarding our personal struggle against sin, the first means De La Salle recommends is the acquisition of the opposing virtues: "We cannot avoid sins

unless we practise the virtues which are opposed to them" (CL 20,184 = DA 216,1,1).

But De La Salle proposes also a higher ideal: "We must practise also a number of virtues which are only counsels, but their practice will enable us to avoid sin and not fall into it again" (CL 20,188 = DA 216,2,1). These virtues are "the material and spiritual works of mercy", that is to say, physical or spiritual acts of kindness towards others, recommended by the Gospel. Recommended also by De La Salle is the practice of the Beatitudes, "which lead souls to the holiness and perfection of the Christian life" (CL 20,189 = DA 216,2,6).

One means is more efficacious than all the others, and that is asking for and obtaining God's grace: "Having been reduced by Adam's sin to a state in which we are powerless to perform any good action with a view to our salvation, we need special help in order to know and love God. [...] This help is called the grace of God, because it is he who gives it to us through his kindness. [...] Jesus Christ himself [...] earned it for us by his sufferings and by his death" (CL 20,194 = DA 300,0,1-2).

4.2. Satisfaction

Temporal punishment due for sin requires satisfaction.¹⁹ De La Salle writes: "These punishments which are imposed for the satisfaction of sins serve to avert many others, because they restrain penitents like a bridle and oblige them to be more careful in the future"²⁰ (CL 20,326 = DA 307,6,1). Satisfaction or penances for our sins "make us share in the satisfaction and sufferings of Our Lord. That is why we must not let a single day of our life pass without performing some act of penance" (CL 20,332 = DA 307,6,16).

4.3. Penance and conversion

A single quotation will suffice to show the importance De La Salle attaches to penance and conversion as means of protecting oneself from sin. He writes: "We must expiate past sins by penance, that we may

thereby regain salvation, which we have forfeited, and obtain the grace to return to God from whom sin has separated us. Hence, also, the Lord tells us by the mouth of his prophet: 'Come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning', for this indeed is the surest means by which to return to God when we have lost him, and contributes most to acquiring purity of heart" (MD 4,1).

4.4. The life of perfection

All Christians are called to perfection by the Gospel invitation: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5,48). Throughout the centuries, the masters of the life of perfection have distinguished three stages in the pursuit of spiritual perfection: the purgative way, the way of enlightenment, the way of union. De La Salle adopts this classification. The first step we have to take if we wish to start out on the road to perfection is to reject sin. In his writings, De La Salle speaks of "the means to become interior" (CL 15,105 = R 13), which correspond perceptibly to these three stages. This is seen very clearly in the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* (CL 14,26-35 = EM 3).

This demanding doctrine is very much in keeping with the teachings of the French school of spirituality. As Tronson writes: "The first degree of love consists in not offending the one one loves. Have we hated mortal sin more than any other evil in the world? Have we always avoided proximate and remote occasions of sin? Are we resolved not to commit any venial sins knowingly? Do we have a horror of the smallest faults and imperfections which are in any way displeasing to God?"²¹

Only souls that are free of sin and detached from creatures are capable of advancing along the path of mental prayer. These are souls "which are living the life of God himself, which consists in thinking only of him and of what concerns him, and in acting only for him. [...] These souls can say with St Paul that it is no longer they who live but that it is Jesus Christ who lives in them" (CL 14,31 = EM 3,102).

5. TEACHERS AS "WATCHFUL GUIDES" (MR 197,3)

In his capacity as a Christian educator, the Brother of the Christian Schools has the mission of forming true disciples of Jesus Christ. He has, therefore, to combat sin by means which are at the same time preventive and corrective, in order to help each child to free himself from the power of evil.

De La Salle describes clearly the mission entrusted to his followers: "We encounter so many obstacles to our salvation in this life that it is impossible to avoid them if we are left to ourselves and to our own efforts. [...] They [children] need the light of watchful guides to lead them on the path of salvation, guides who have an adequate understanding in matters of piety, and who are aware of the usual shortcomings of young people, so that they can help them to be aware of them and avoid them. It is to ensure this that God has provided children with teachers entrusted by him with this task" (MR 197,3).

Elsewhere, we read: "The way to save a child's soul from hell is to have recourse to a remedy which will give him wisdom, that is, to correction" (MR 203,2). He adds, however: "Human beings and even children, being endowed with reason, must not be corrected as if they had none, but as reasonable persons" (MR 204,1).

In another meditation, De La Salle sums up the mission of the Brothers in the following words: "Remember that you are obliged [...] to prepare the way of the Lord in the hearts of your pupils, and to destroy the reign of sin within them" (MF 162,2). "It must have been the ardent zeal you had for the salvation of the souls you teach, which led you to sacrifice yourself and to use up your entire life in order to give them a Christian education and procure for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next" (MR 201,3).

In the above passages, De La Salle describes the noble mission of the Brother and of all Christian teachers in fairly general terms. When he comes to speak of the fight against sin, he becomes more specific in his insistence: "Inspire your pupils with a hatred for sin, as being a shameful disease which infects the soul and makes it unworthy of approaching God and of appearing before him. Inspire them with a love of virtue, and fill their hearts with sentiments of piety. Endeavour to make God reign in them, for in this way they will have no share in sin, or at least they will avoid those serious sins that bring death to the soul. Often recall to mind the purpose of your vocation, and let this thought urge you to establish and maintain this reign of God in the hearts of your pupils" (MD 67,1).

6. BIBLICAL SOURCES OF DE LA SALLE'S TEACHING ON SIN

As we have seen, De La Salle does not treat of sin from a dispassionate legalistic point of view. He places it in the context of the mystery of redemption as well as in the wider context of God's loving plan for creation.

"Divine Word, uncreated Wisdom, you who became man for the love of us in order to save us and release us from our sins..." (CL 17,211 = I 3,35,1). De La Salle begins his consideration of the birth of Jesus with the following words, inspired by the first letter of St John: "How can I dare, my Lord and my God, commit sin again, knowing, as St John says, that you came to wipe out sin and to destroy the works of the devil, which are sins".²²

In the *Duties of a Christian*, there are few biblical references. These are more numerous in his theoreti-

cal writings based on the Councils and the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.²³ They are particularly numerous in the prayers which are included in his *Instructions for Confession*. Here we meet a procession of biblical figures: Adam, Cain, the Pharisee, Zaccheus, the Ninivites, Mary Magdalen, Pharaoh, Judas, David, Peter, the Prodigal Son and so on. There are also references to parables and verses from the Psalms which fit in quite naturally into his text (cf. CL 17,210-213 = I 3,34,37).

Here is the commentary of M. Campos and M. Sauvage on the biblical roots of the acts of contrition suggested by De La Salle in his *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*: "This recourse to Scripture gives all its religious perspective to the attitude of contrition: not the crushing of the guilty person,

but confidence in merciful sanctity; not the isolation of the one reprov'd, but the assurance of the relationship which reconciles and transforms. The regret certainly remains, and it might overwhelm, but it is expressed, above all, in a cry of distress and, at the same time, of confidence. God is going to pardon the faults, forget the sins. Even more, God is going to transform

the person and bring about interior renewal".²⁴

It is not possible to deal more fully in this short article with the biblical basis of De La Salle's teaching on sin. A more exhaustive treatment of the subject would reveal De La Salle's wide knowledge of the Scriptures and especially their contribution to his spirituality.

7. CONCLUSION: "TO RENDER AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR SOULS" (MR 205,2)

Theological thinking about sin has evolved since the Council of Trent, especially regarding original sin, culpability and the collective dimension of sin. In the light of this, perhaps a comment would not be out of place regarding the limitations of De La Salle's teaching on this subject, limitations, it should be added, which take nothing away from his deep spiritual insight.

De La Salle's contemporaries considered Adam, it would seem, to be an historical figure, whose sin, at the origin of our history, draws us away from God, puts us into a state of sin, which we all endorse when we begin to sin personally. In our own days, what we seek in the first chapters of Genesis is not first of all an account of our origins, but an account of our own experience, seen in the light of faith as well as in the light of the centuries of experience of the People of God. Each time we meet a person we meet a sinner. The parallel drawn by St Paul between Adam and Christ has to be seen in the context of universal salvation in Jesus. It is by experiencing the life of a son of God, received in Jesus, that we can measure how far from God we would be without him. The heart of man, even healed by baptism, which is communion with Christ, remains a mystery: "I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate" (Rm 7,15).

We can see the Founder's insistence that concupiscence in itself is not a sin in a new light thanks to the human sciences and, especially, to psychoanalysis. It is important to make a distinction between sin and feelings of guilt. Sinning is not committing a fault or breaking a law, even less considering oneself inferior to the ideal one has of oneself. It is breaking off the

filial relationship God wishes us to have in Jesus. This helps us to understand the apparently strange affirmation we find in De La Salle's act of faith: "I believe it is enough to commit a single mortal sin, and to die in this state, to be damned" (GA 0,32,3). Nowadays we say that, if God creates us without our involvement, he does not save us without it. This is the frightening consequence of the depth of God's love for man. For many of our contemporaries, the idea of hell is a scandal: it seems incompatible with the goodness of God. One could say, however, that it is a sign of his "powerlessness" in the face of a sinner who is obstinate in refusing God's love. God accepted that his Son, in order to save us from sin, should witness to his Father's love by going so far as to die for us. What other proof of his love do we need?

Our age has had to come to terms with some abominable crimes — total war, genocide, racism, the unequal development of the world. These could make those witnessed by De La Salle — the various forms of flagrant social injustice on which society was based in his days — pale into insignificance. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we are acutely conscious of the social dimension of sin, and dare to speak of the sin of the world, and the sin of the Church, and their link with the personal dimension of sin.

This is very much in line with what De La Salle thought, De La Salle, who shows so clearly how teachers are the cooperators of God in the salvation of children, and who makes us realise the extent of our responsibility when, speaking of the Last Judgment, he says: "God will begin by making you give an account of their [the children's] souls before asking you to give an account of your own" (MR 205,2).

¹ BOYER, Ch., *Le péché originel* in *Théologie du péché*, Desclée, p. 253.

² CL 20,162 = DA 213,0,2. The expression (in the French text) may appear clumsy: "Something which one omits to do against the commandments". The author, however, is trying to draw attention to sins of omission which result in a person not doing what God wants.

³ Michel de Bay, known as Baius (1513-1589), a theologian from Louvain, some of whose propositions were condemned by Pius V in 1567.

⁴ In CL 21,124 = DB 2,14,6. De La Salle explains that "venial means forgivable".

⁵ The word *funeste* (used with the word *exemple* in the French text) does not mean "harmful" here, but "relating to death", that is, capable of leading to death.

⁶ CL 29,166 = DA 213,0,11. There are many other quotations from St Augustine we could give. Cf. *De perf. just. horn.*, VI, 15 : PL 44,298 : "Man keeps his inclination to God, but does not include in his conduct as much charity as he could and ought to"; or *Ep.* 153, V,12 : PL 33,658.

⁷ De La Salle uses the expression "inequality of sins" and draws attention in particular to "the sins of malice which we commit of our own free will, with perfect knowledge and entire freedom, without being stimulated by any passion to do so" (CL 21,126 = DB 2,15,3). He condemns also the sins that "we commit by sharing in the sins of others" (CL 20,183 = DA 215,0,70 and the sin of scandal (CL 21,95f = DB 2,7; cf. CL 17,127 = 12,5,5).

⁸ CL 21,127 = DB 2,15,7 gives a list of 6 sins against the Holy Spirit. We should note that "obstinacy in sin" listed as N° 3 is expressed in different terms in DA in N° 1 & 5.

⁹ *Augustinus*, vol. II, bk. 3, ch. 18, Rouen, 1652.

¹⁰ *Id.*, vol. III, bk. 4, ch. 1-11.

¹¹ According to the bishop of Ypres, by God's free choice, grace intervenes to make man choose a "heavenly delectation", without his will being involved in the process. The Jansenists called semi-Pelagians theologians who sustained that it was essential for man to cooperate in the work of his salvation by his fidelity to sufficient grace. Cf. *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*, vol. X, col. 449f, art. *Jansénisme*.

¹² CL 17,187 = I 3,13,1. Elsewhere, De La Salle writes about these evil tendencies as follows: "God also does not command us to do anything impossible, such as not to feel sometimes these kinds of [...] disordered impulses which occur in the flesh in opposition to reason [...] because sin does not lie in the flesh but in the will" (CL 20,150 = DA 211,0,9).

¹³ He writes, however: "Bad thoughts and bad desires are not always a sin, because they can occur in the mind

or in the senses without the will being involved" (CL 20,149 = DA 211,0,6).

¹⁴ "The means we can use in order not to offend God by bad thoughts and bad desires is to mortify our exterior senses and our passions, and to raise our mind to God when we have bad thoughts" (CL 20,151 = DA 210,0,10).

¹⁵ De La Salle has his doubts about "the wisdom of this world", when he writes that it "serves as a cover for sin" (MR 194,2). It should be noted that he is not referring to individual persons here, but to the world seen as representing the totality of forces opposed to the Kingdom of God.

¹⁶ The original text says: "to make amends (*reparer*) for salvation" (MD 25,1). This is not traditional theological language, nor typical of De La Salle's language. The *Œuvres complètes* (Rome, 1993) suggests: "to prepare (*préparer*) for salvation", an expression which raises the same objections. It could be simply a mistake on the part of the author, the person who copied the text, or the printer who may have been thinking of "make amends for the sin of Adam" or "make amends for a wrong". The verb "bring about" (*opérer*) seems to fit better here, because it was commonly used by Christian writers of the time, and because De La Salle himself uses it on 6 other occasions when speaking of salvation, and once with reference to justification.

¹⁷ We may be somewhat astonished by the expression: "to avoid sin more than hell". Only an oblique view of spiritual life can explain this puzzling statement.

¹⁸ CL 21,12 = DB 2,13,7; CL 23,284 = GA 0,18,2. De La Salle seems to be inspired here by the *Devoirs du chrétien*, a catechism published in 1672 by Claude Joly, bishop of Agen: "Sin is a greater evil than poverty, sickness and death [...] because it is the cause and the greatest of the evils we suffer in this life and in the next; because it includes them all, and because it deserves all the punishments imaginable" (p. 130).

¹⁹ This is the doctrine of the Council of Trent: "Not only by penances freely chosen to make amends for sin, or by those imposed by the priest which are adjusted to the gravity of the sin, but also (and this is a greater proof of love) by temporal trials inflicted by God and patiently suffered by us, can we give satisfaction to God the Father through Jesus Christ" (session 14, ch. 9).

²⁰ De La Salle bases himself on Trent (session 14, ch. 8).

²¹ Louis Tronson (1622-1700), Superior General of St Sulpice. The quotation is taken from of the numerous manuscript editions of *Examens particuliers* (Archives of the author, p. 371). This doctrine can be found in several of De La Salle's meditations, in his EM and in the *Collection* (CL 15,55-65 = R 13).

²² CL 14,68 = EM 8,200,1 quoting 1 Jn 3,8. See in CL 50,413, note 200 which comments on this text of De La Salle's.

²³ We find biblical quotations or allusions in CL 20, 167,169,182 = DA 213,0,13; 214,1,2; 215,0,6-7. Likewise

and in greater numbers in CL 20,274, 275, 282, 309, 316, 335, 336, 340 = DA 306,0,1-2; 307,1,6; 307,4,15; 307,5,4; 307,7,4 & 7; 307,8,2-4.

²⁴ CL 50,359 = *Encountering God in the Depths of the Mind and Heart*, 193.

Complementary themes

Conversion

Imitation of Christ

Love-Charity

Penitent

Redemption

Spirit of the world

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Introduction and conclusion by Br Alain HOURY

95. STABILITY

Summary

1. The professional context.

2. De La Salle's painful experience of instability

2.1.The first group of teachers 2.2.The second crisis in the young society 2.3.In 1691, another crucial period 2.4.Other events.

3. Introduction of the vow of stability

3.1.The "heroic" vow of 1691. 3.2.The 1694 vows 3.3.After 1694.

4. Lasallian stability and Church tradition

4.1 .Monastic stability 4.2.Other ways of establishing stability preceding the vows of the Brothers.

5. The meaning of Lasallian stability

5.1.Stability and mobility 5.2.Stability and association 5.3.Stability and the "work of God".

The words "stability" and "stable" occur only some dozen times in De La Salle's writings, and yet his life and achievements after 1680 show the importance of the stability of individuals during the foundation of the "Society of the Christian Schools", and later for its success and continued existence. We shall base our study of the subject on the biographers' accounts of De La Salle's life, on his writings, and especially on the formulas of vows.

1. THE PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

Numerous historians of education in 17th century France speak of the notable lack of stability among the teachers of the "little schools". Their analysis of the causes reveals the following: the method of recruitment, the lack of training, difficult living conditions, the variety of responsibilities, contracts which gave little security, the low salary, etc.

The difficulty of the work, the large size of the classes, the dilapidation or unsuitability of the premises and, as likely as not, the teachers' tendency to move from place to place, were also factors leading to instability among teachers. As this was a well-known char-

acteristic of teachers, the attitude towards the profession was generally a very negative one.

It needed all the efforts of educational pioneers concerned for the future of the schools to convince teachers of the need for some stability, and subsequently, to give their profession some dignity and status in society. Among those who tried to change the attitudes of teachers, with greater or lesser success, we find Jacques de Batencourt in Paris (Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet), Charles Démié in Lyons, Nicolas Barré in Paris, and a number of others. It was De La Salle, however, who had the greatest success.

This historical background helps us to understand

the emphasis of the Founder of the Christian Schools on stability among his followers. No doubt he saw in it a source of mutual encouragement for the Brothers

within their own congregation, and of greater confidence in the Christian Schools in society as a whole. There were setbacks, however.

2. DE LA SALLE'S PAINFUL EXPERIENCE OF INSTABILITY

Without going into detailed explanations, it is useful to recall some of the difficulties De La Salle had to face over the 40 year period he spent founding the Institute. His first biographers describe them in some detail, but we shall restrict ourselves to a brief historical survey.

2.1. The first group of teachers recruited by Nye and De La Salle in 1679-1680, disintegrated steadily and completely, despite receiving financial support and spiritual and professional formation. This proved to be a cruel disappointment for the young canon, who was much affected by it (CL 7,168-174).

2.2. A second crisis in the young society occurred in 1683 and 1684. There was now a new group of teachers, who were not yet religious, and who were being offered a way of life with no guarantee of material security. These came to De La Salle now to speak of their quite legitimate worries about the future. After much reflection, De La Salle sought the advice of Nicolas Barre, who recommended him strongly to divest himself completely of his wealth: his canonry, his inheritance. The personal discernment De La Salle was obliged to make on this occasion, and which is reported by Blain, shows clearly his fear that once

again his teachers could leave him and thus deal a fatal blow to his young society (CL 7,19 If).

2.3. In 1691 there was **another crucial period**, during which, as Blain tells us, the young society once again "faced ruin" (CL 7,312). The biographer writes that, because of new defections of Brothers in Paris and Rheims, the lack of formation of several others, the death of some and the fatigue of many others, the very survival of the society was threatened. De La Salle's solution to the situation was the "heroic" vow of 1691.

2.4. There were **other painful events** in the years that followed. Among others, there was the departure of Nicolas Vuyart, the break-up of the Marseilles community in 1712 (CL 8,81f), and the defection of several Brothers in the North of France during the Founder's absence from 1712 to 1714 (CL 8,107-119).

All these events led the Founder to realise the importance of the stability of the members of the society, especially as he gradually discovered, through faith, God's plan for him. In his determination to respond to God's call, he became convinced that "God's work" called for a radical commitment and stability, however difficult this might prove.

3. INTRODUCTION OF THE VOW OF STABILITY

3.1. The "heroic" vow of 1691

In 1691, De La Salle's young society faced ruin, and yet he was convinced it was doing "God's work". In his desire to continue this work he decided to associate some Brothers more closely with himself. This is the explanation of the commitment made on November 21st 1691 (CL 10,116 = EP 1).

It is enough to read the text and to consider its language, to see that the three signatories of this pact committed themselves irrevocably to support the society, if necessary, to a heroic degree, such as begging for alms. The fidelity of each one — his stability — is stated in unequivocal terms. It is an act of

faith in God's fidelity to the ministers he has chosen to further his loving plan.

3.2. The 1694 vows

By 1694, the community had established its own identity sufficiently to enable De La Salle and 12 Brothers to take an important step by pronouncing perpetual vows of obedience, association and stability. It was the first time that the third vow was formally mentioned. It could be thought that the idea of stability was already sufficiently expressed by making perpetual vows. The Brothers, however, wished to mention it explicitly in order to give it more force.

3.3. After 1694

Subsequently, despite some minor alterations in the formula of the vows, the vow of stability was maintained. An examination of the formulas of vows prior to 1725, the date of the Bull of Approbation, reveals that, while all the members of the community made the vow of stability after 1694, this vow did not necessarily mean that they were making a perpetual commitment. During this period of the history of the Institute, stability was understood as a commitment to remain in the society for the period for which one had made vows. This is borne out by the formula for triennial vows made by Brother Irenee on September

25th 1716 (CL 3,20). The formula of vows of the serving Brothers was no different from that of other Brothers. The commitment to stability, therefore, concerned all the members of the Institute who made vows. It is interesting to note that stability was observed, *de facto*, by the Brothers without vows who were part of the Institute for two centuries.

Finally, we should recall that the vow of stability was mentioned in the petition submitted by the Brothers to the Holy See with a view to obtaining recognition for the Institute, as also in the Bull of Approbation granted by Pope Benedict XIII in 1725, and in the *Rules* which were modified as a result.

4. LASALLIAN STABILITY AND CHURCH TRADITION

The concept of stability went back a long way in monastic life. It is interesting to see to what extent De La Salle was inspired by this tradition and applied it to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

4.1. Monastic stability

Towards the end of his work on *The Spirituality of the New Testament and of the Fathers* (see bibliography), and speaking of western monasticism, Louis Bouyer explains how St Cesaire of Aries introduced the obligation of stability in his *Rule of the Monks* at the beginning of the 5th century. He writes: "The great innovation of Cesaire, however, by which he announces and prepares the way for the work of St Benedict, will be, together with the strict requirement of having all things in common in the monastery, that of stability. By means of it, and for the first time, an end was put to the confusing multiplicity of attempts — all destined to fail — to found congregations, which up till then had drained the energy of western monasticism" (pp. 605-606).

The same idea, says Bouyer, was taken up in the *Benedictine Rule*: "The first chapter declares, after a somewhat unflattering portrait of the kinds of monks existing at the time, that the author intends to write for Cenobites. The completely individualistic Sarabaites, and the Gyrovagues who spent their time moving from monastery to monastery, having been condemned, the Cenobites are declared *fortissimum genus*" (p. 609).

Bouyer continues: "However, the author of the *Rule* was so convinced that stability was a condition *sine qua non* of monastic life, as he understood it, that he wanted, in spite of the possible risks of which he must have been aware, the abbot to be elected for life; and, for the same reason, the postulant to make a commitment 'to be a soldier of Christ' for the whole of his life under his guidance. This second aspect, stability, is deliberately as much a characteristic of the Rule as its clear teaching and detailed prescriptions regarding the abbot. [...] Benedictine stability does not stifle this idea of being 'a soldier of Christ', but rather it forces the monk to interiorise the concept in a radical way. Stability is the condition which makes obedience possible and, by it, obedience is revealed as the great means to achieve detachment. This is the principle on which the *schola*, that is, the monastery, is founded, and its safeguard is the stability of both the abbot and the monk. [...] Stability, obedience, humility are in the service of an ideal as old as the very beginnings of monastic life, and one that is biblical *par excellence*: that of a life in which faith, faith in Christ and his sovereignty, subsumes life in its entirety" (p. 612).

De La Salle was very probably inspired by this monastic view of stability. The extracts we have quoted emphasise both its geographical nature — the monk bound to a monastery and to his abbot — as well as its spiritual nature — stability seen as a response to God's fidelity through faith, and by sharing in the accomplishment of his work of salvation.

4.2. Other ways of establishing stability preceding the vows of the Brothers

During the period just prior to the foundation of the Institute of the Brothers, a number of developments occurred in the Church regarding the vow of stability. In accordance with the guidelines of the Council of Trent, which finished in 1563, St Pius V had restricted the right of the bishops to found or accept in their dioceses new congregations of the common life with simple vows or without vows. Only new congregations with solemn vows could be authorised. In practice, this prohibition had little effect, because new religious institutes which were subsequently founded ensured the stability of their members by requiring them to make a private vow of chastity, or some other similar commitment.

A good example in this connection is the Company of Jesus. Ignatius Loyola introduced an interesting innovation in the area which interests us: in the Company, in addition to regular members who made solemn vows, there were also priests who had the role of spiritual coadjutors, and lay persons who had that of temporal coadjutors. These two categories did not make solemn vows but only perpetual simple vows.

This innovation — religious with perpetual simple vows — caused much controversy in Roman circles. They found it difficult to accept that there could exist a kind of stability which was expressed through perpetual vows made by persons who did not make solemn vows.

And yet, in 1546, Pope Paul III declared that sim-

ple perpetual vows were true religious vows. This did not prevent discussion on the matter continuing. In 1584, Pope Gregory XIII finally settled the question in the Bull *Ascendente Domino*, which stated that persons pronouncing simple perpetual vows were truly religious. Despite the universal character of this Bull, it was often interpreted, even in Rome, as giving a special dispensation applicable only to the Company of Jesus.¹

The new "societies of apostolic life" which appeared in France at the beginning of the 17th century are significant also in this connection. They ensured stability by a "contract of incorporation" which implied the acceptance of their aims and of the norms which governed the society. These contracts can be compared, at least, as far as their significance is concerned, with the 1694 formula of vows.

In some of these societies — in the Eudistes, for example — the members made a commitment to be faithful, not for the purpose of practising the evangelical counsels, but in order to exercise an apostolic ministry.² This was also the case at the beginning of the Brothers' Institute.

Two of the great promoters of societies of apostolic life in France were Cardinal Pierre de Berulle and his disciple, Jean Jacques Olier, Founder of the Priests of St Sulpice.

As we know, De La Salle was greatly influenced by the Sulpicians, and his ideas regarding stability owe a great deal to what he observed in his contacts with them.

5. THE MEANING OF LASALLIAN STABILITY

5.1. Stability and mobility

Although De La Salle was well-informed regarding monastic tradition and what was common practice among societies of apostolic life, he invented another kind of stability, adapted to the nature and aims of the *Society of the Christian Schools*. A closer examination of this question will help us to understand more fully the nature of Lasallian stability.

First of all, it should be noted that the vow of stability in the 1694 formula of vows is associated with the promise of total personal availability: "in whatever place this shall be" and "to do in the said society whatever work I shall be assigned" (CL 2,42 = EP

2,0,3). This has continued to be the case throughout the history of the Institute, even if, after the Bull of 1725, it was expressed in a slightly different way. In other words, Lasallian stability is not geographical, unlike that of the monk who is bound to "his" monastery.

This commitment to be ready to go anywhere one is sent, has nothing in common with the instability of the teachers of the Little Schools: it is exercised within the well-defined framework of association. The vow of stability goes hand-in-hand with a "vow of obedience, whether to the body of the society or to its superiors" (*id.*), who can ask a Brother to move for the

sake of the common good. This can involve taking the place of another Brother, taking up a post of responsibility, changing the nature of one's work, and always for the good of the whole network of schools. It is impossible to dissociate from the Brothers' availability the functional nature of the body which constitutes the Institute or, at least, one of its structures.

5.2. Stability and association

Stability, which is a long-lasting commitment, is an integral element of the undertaking "to conduct together and by association gratuitous schools" in the service of the poor. This stability is not a passing infatuation, however enthusiastic, but a desire to devote oneself permanently to this work, with other persons.

The present formula of vows says: "to conduct together and by association schools for the service of the poor", and marks a return to the functional dimension of the 1694 formula. For any association to be effective, there has to be a certain permanence, a certain fidelity on the part of its members.

5.3. Stability and the "work of God"

However, for De La Salle, the primary aim of his work is not simply human and utilitarian: it is to accomplish the "work of God", the eternal plan of salvation fulfilled in history. Stability has, therefore, a spiritual dimension, which is more important than all the others: proclaiming the Gospel to the poor.

In this sense, it is beyond human analysis and can be understood fully only in terms of the theology of salvation. Lasallian stability has to be analysed in the light of Holy Scripture³ and in the context of the missionary tradition of the Church. This is the ultimate explanation of Lasallian fidelity.

De La Salle, having realised this clearly from the moment he involved himself with schools, dared to commit himself, and urged the Brothers to commit themselves courageously, in their turn, to the task of accomplishing this "work of God" among the children of the artisans and the poor.

The vow of stability goes back to the very beginning of the Institute, although, up to the appearance of the Code of Canon Law in 1917, the Institute admitted also, as permanent members, Brothers without vows, some of whom gave proof of their stability by remaining in the Institute to the end of their lives.

The question arises whether one needs to be a Brother in the present canonical sense in order to profess stability. Is the stability involved here one that is connected to the social entity of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, or is it a stability in the service of the poor through education, bringing together persons from different walks of life? This question has considerable importance at the present time when, not only the apostolic mission, but also the charism handed down by De La Salle, can be shared by religious and lay persons.

In the midst of the rapid changes in mentality and behaviour in our societies, what meaning and value can there be in stability? How can it be reconciled with the equally recognised need for adaptability? How can it be reconciled with the knowledge that certain values are understood differently nowadays, and in the light of the weakness of our nature, especially regarding fidelity? The answer to these questions can lie only in a greater understanding of the real situation of the persons from different walks of life, who associate together to take part in the Lasallian mission to educate and evangelise, a mission which continues in the world of today the same "work of God" pursued by the Founder. It is clear, therefore, that any consideration of the meaning of stability has to bear in mind the need to be faithful to Lasallian history and, at the same time, to adapt to the educational and pastoral conditions of the contemporary world.

¹ Cf. ALVAREZ GOMEZ, J., *Historia de la vida religiosa*, Madrid, 1990, p.168-169.

² Cf. ALVAREZ GOMEZ, p. 348.

³ See, for example, the *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*

(Paris, Cerf, 1988) which, under four headings, analyses succinctly the action of God in the history of salvation: the fidelity of God, the fidelity of man, the fidelity of Jesus, the fidelity of the faithful of Christ.

Complementary themes

Association	God's work	Retreat
Brother's dress	Imitation of Christ	Rule-Regularity
Consecration	Obedience	State
Fidelity-Perseverance	Poor	World

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Rule of St Benedict.

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96. SUFFERING

(to suffer and derivatives)

Summary

1. The context.

2. De La Salle's attitude towards suffering.

3. De La Salle's teaching on suffering

3.1 Jesus Christ's attitude towards suffering 3.2. Suffering and sin 3.3.The attitude of a believer 3.4.The attitude of a teaching Brother 3.5.Insistence on the love of God and union with him in suffering.

1. THE CONTEXT

The Trévoux *Dictionnaire universel* (1721) defines suffering as "pain of mind or body, or the state of a person who endures suffering". A second meaning relevant to the purpose of this article is "the action of suffering, or being in pain". An example of this given in the same dictionary is: "A religious ought to seek spiritual progress in the suffering of injuries".

He defines the verb "to suffer" as "enduring pain, evil or some serious ailment".

The *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (article by Pierre Sempé, 1990) speaks of Jesus alleviating all kinds of suffering by his power of healing. He does not teach that suffering is a divine punishment for sin (Lk 13,4).

He gives an example of patience in suffering and prepares himself for suffering on behalf of his people and ultimately his own glory.

The same dictionary points out that, in his writings, Paul associates the suffering of Jesus with Old Testament sacrifices, but adds that these have been replaced by the sacrifice of Jesus. Human suffering is valuable when it is associated with that of Christ for the edification of the Church (Col 1,24) in the hope of the resurrection (Phil 3,10).

Typical also of Christian spirituality is Saint Vincent de Paul's view that, while suffering can become sanctifying, we must work to alleviate the suffering of others after the example and teaching of Christ.

2. DE LA SALLE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUFFERING

Even as a child De La Salle seemed to have a special sensitivity to the suffering of others and a desire to alleviate it. Over a period of several years, from the age of 28 to 33, he became progressively more dedicated to the work of establishing the *Christian Schools* for poor children, so that he gave up completely a life of comparative wealth and comfort to embrace a life of suffering poverty with all the pain of hunger and sickness that this entailed.

Wishing to be "a disciple and imitator of Jesus Christ" (CL 20, preface = DA 0,0,5), he bore in mind that "it is the love of suffering and mortification that renders us like him" (MF 176,3).

He was motivated by the kenosis of the Son of God in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. De La Salle practiced mortification and self-denial to a heroic degree.

In addition to bodily suffering, De La Salle also practiced a heroic degree of humility in his acceptance of the shortcomings of the Brothers with whom he worked, and the hostility of all sorts of people, not excluding Church authorities from whom he should have received support. (Cf. Blain's *Life of De La Salle*, CL 8, 391-401 on his poverty, 402-423 on his humility, 451-465 on his penitence and mortification, 466-481 on his patience and kindness).

Various modern historians have been struck by the opposition encountered in France by any attempt to make the common people literate, and by the moral sufferings the saintly educator had to undergo as a consequence. This observation is important because, as we shall see next, it reinforces the theological teachings of the author of the *Duties* by this reference to everyday experience.

3. DE LA SALLE'S TEACHING ON SUFFERING

A good summary of De La Salle's idea of suffering can be found in his extensive treatise on the Christian life, *Les Devoirs d'un Chretien envers Dieu* (DA), and its question-and-answer companion volumes (DB, DC). These texts gave De La Salle an opportunity to state his theology more systematically than in any of his other writings. They can be considered, therefore, as a framework for understanding what suffering meant to him.

3.1 Attitude of Jesus Christ to suffering

In general, it can be said that for De La Salle suffering has no significance apart from Jesus Christ, and in Christ all suffering can have a positive value.

The purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ into this world was to experience suffering and death to atone "for the sins of all people" (CL 20,46 = DA 104,7,1; cf. MF 152,1). Jesus passed his whole life in suffering (CL 20,46 & 20,86 = DA 104,7,1 & 106,0,12; cf. MF 165,3; MF 89,2; CL 17,216 = I 3,39,1).

This emphasis on the suffering of Jesus reflects the doctrine of annihilation of the Word (*anéantissement du Verbe*) in the French School of Spirituality. Accordingly, suffering was undertaken out of love:

"The eternal Father wished to deliver his only Son to death on the cross [...] to give a proof of his excessive love, and to give us, in the person of his Son, a great example of humility and patience, and to stimulate us to love him with all the affection of our heart, and to suffer willingly all the sufferings he will choose to send us" (CL 20,56 = DA 104,9,5).

The "treasure of the Church", which is completely spiritual, is made up of "the superabundant satisfaction of Our Lord", who "suffered much more than was called for by the justice of God" (CL 20,342f = DA 307,8,8f). In imitation of Christ, the saints accepted suffering with joy, and their merits are applied to the penitent faithful (CL 22,112 = DC 30,12,6).

3.2 Suffering and sin

The suffering of Jesus expiates sin (CL 20,346 = DA 307,8,18; cf. CL 14,26 & 14,67f = EM 2,83 & 8,195f); it satisfies God's justice for the offense of sin against God (CL 21,46 = DB 1,10,7; cf. CL 17,216 = I 3,39,2).

Only Jesus could satisfy for sin because he was God and could balance the offense against God by the suffering of God; but the Son of God had to become human, because God himself cannot experience suf-

fering (CL 21,46f = DB 1,10,7f). De La Salle writes: "The offense that our sins gave God being infinite, it was necessary that the satisfaction required for them should also be infinite, and this could not be given by any created being". He adds, however, that it was not necessary for the Man-God to undergo great suffering and death to obtain this satisfaction. Hence "why did Jesus Christ suffer so much?" De La Salle replies: "It was to show us the great love he had for us, and to make us have a greater horror for sin" (CL 21,46f = DB 1,10,7).

3.3. Attitude of the believer

The Christian, a sinner and redeemed at the same time, is associated with the redemptive work of his Saviour. De La Salle shows the role that accepted suffering can play in it. "Question: In how many ways can we give satisfaction to God? Answer: We can do so in seven ways: 1. By the penance the confessor gives us. 2. By the penances we undertake voluntarily. 3. By the afflictions that God sends us, such as illnesses, etc..." (CL 21,198 = DB 3,34,3).

The Christian honours the risen Christ by bearing with suffering "with patience, tranquillity and joy [...] in the hope of eternal happiness" (CL 22,96 = DC 30,8,9). Suffering in order to expiate sin is partly the theme of the "Profession of a Penitent" which De La Salle borrowed from Jean Jacques Olier (CL 15,87f = R 15,7). See *Lasallian Themes 2*, the article *Penitent* by Gilles Beaudet.

The superabundance of Jesus' suffering is also the source of all the graces needed by the faithful to know and love God (CL 20,194 = DA 300,0,2), and to have confidence in God's mercy (CL 20,364 = DA 308,2,14) and in the efficacy of prayer (CL 20,460 -DA 404,1,6).

The Christian is called to share in the sufferings of Christ (CL 20,223; 20,227; 20,239 = DA 302,3,3; 302,3,11; 302,2,7). Patience can procure for him peace even in suffering (CL 20,227 = DA 302,3,11). Suffering can be a form of prayer (CL 20,473 = DA 405,1,12), an act of love of God (CL 20,186; 20,233; 21,136; 22,194 = DA 216,1,5; DA 303,1,4; DB 2,17,5; DC 42,13,17), of love of neighbour (CL 20,342f = DA 307,8,90f), or of the souls in purgatory (CL 20,350 = DA 307,9,2).

3.4. Attitude of the teaching Brother

In the meditations, De La Salle wrote for the Brothers he exhorts them have a love for suffering (MF 78,3; 95,3; 102,3; 118,2; 124,2; 145,1-3; 149,3; 152,3; 173,3; 177,2; 183,1).

In some of the community prayers of the Brothers there are other examples of De La Salle's attitude towards suffering. The *Aspirations to Jesus Suffering* were recited twice daily, and significantly to prepare the Brothers mentally for the recreation periods that were to follow (CL 25, art. 99 above; cf. RC 30,20,6). Borrowed from Jean de Bernieres, this litany concludes with the request that Jesus "imprint deeply in our hearts an esteem and love for [his sufferings] and make us desire to practice them".

3.5. Insistence on love and union with God in suffering

Love is at the root of the attitude of acceptance of suffering, both in the life of Jesus and in that of the Christian. De La Salle teaches this in his catechisms. In the meditations he wrote for the Brothers, he says it with even greater insistence.

Jesus had a desire and a love for suffering, based on his love for the Father's will and his love for his people. This is the theme for the meditation for Wednesday in Holy Week, which would need to be quoted in full. The same applies to the meditations for Good Friday and Holy Saturday (MD 25, 27 & 28).

Christians pay honor to the Risen Lord by accepting suffering with patience, tranquillity and joy (CL 22,96 & 284 = DC 30,8,9 & 44,20,7).

The saints, too, had a love for suffering in the sight of God (MF 79,1; 102,3; 109,2; 130,3; 140,3; 142,2; 149,3; 154,2; 176,3). In the meditation on Saint Francis of Assisi the motivation for this is stated clearly: "When he considered what Jesus had endured for his sake, he resolved, after leaving the world, never to allow a single moment of his life to pass without some mortification. Jesus Christ in agony, that divine model of all who choose voluntary suffering for God's sake, became the special delight of his heart" (MF 173,3).

Similarly, in his meditation on Saint Catherine of Alexandria De La Salle says that when persons are

<p>prepared "by seclusion, prayer, and the reading of Scripture (as she was), [...] it frequently happens that they are undisturbed by suffering because they receive suffering as coming from God and as a means to be closely united to him and to possess him (MF 192,3). In his meditation on the feast of All Saints De La Salle uses the epistle to the Hebrews to speak of the suffering that the saints endured, saying that they were</p>	<p>animated by the hope of eternal joy and by the example of Jesus (MF 183,2). One way for Christians to celebrate the feast of Christmas is "to thank God for having given us his own Son", and then "to ask God for the grace to love suffering and especially to suffer cold and poverty willingly for the love of God" (CL 22,142 = DC 42,2,7).</p>
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Nothing in De La Salle¹'s teaching seems more countercultural than his doctrine about suffering. We are living in an age of self-indulgence in which any willingness to suffer patiently is often regarded as psychologically unbalanced. Medical science has almost alleviated pain for those who can afford its care. Though philosophers have taught the inevitability and positive effects of suffering that can be borne patiently, only a deep faith can assist the ordinary person to recognize any value in suffering. Jesus taught us that suffering is not a part of God's plan to punish sin (Jn 9,3), though he permits it as a consequence of our finite world and our imperfect human nature; what God wills is patience, gentleness, and compassion in the imitation of his Son, Jesus.

Complementary Themes

Abandonment

Consolation-Tipidity-Dryness

Humility

Mortification

Penitent

Renunciation

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Br Augustine Robert LOES

97. UNION AMONG THE BROTHERS

Summary

1. The source of union among the Brothers
2. The Holy Trinity as a model of fraternal union
3. The example of the first Christian communities
4. The union between De La Salle and the Brothers
5. De La Salle's testament
6. Jesus Christ present in the midst of the Brothers
7. The practice of fraternal life 7.1.Obstacles to union 7.2.Factors promoting union
8. The practice of fraternal forgiveness
9. Union and prayer
10. Union and association

1. The source of union among the Brothers

Union in a Christian community is, above all, an evangelical virtue, and it is as such primarily that De La Salle wishes to practise it himself and to encourage his Brothers to practise it also. The example of the Good Samaritan leads him to write the following : "Our Lord gives us to understand what sort of charity we should have for our Brothers, and the nature of the union which should exist among us" (MD 65,1).¹ One text he refers to constantly is chapter 17 of St John's Gospel, in which Jesus prays to his Father, asking for union among his disciples.² Generally speaking, the Gospel is the Founder's principal source of inspiration when speaking of fraternal union, As he says: "Perhaps, [...] you have not seriously reflected upon the obligation under which you are of being closely united with your Brothers. Yet this is one of the chief virtues of your state, for, as Our Lord says in the Holy Gospel, you are all brothers" (MF 91,2 quoting Mt 23,8).

2. The Holy Trinity as a model of fraternal union

We can consider De La Salle's commentary on chapter 17 of St John's Gospel as the basis of his teaching on union among the Brothers: "This union should be so close and so firm as to resemble the union that exists between the three Divine Persons, not exactly, however, [...] but by participation. And this union of heart and mind, which Jesus desires to see among his apostles, should produce the same effect as the essential union between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is to say, they should all share the same sentiments, have the same will, the same affections, the same rules and the same practices" (MD 39,3).

The Holy Trinity is considered to be the model of the union that ought to exist among the Brothers. In the same way, the first Christian communities are offered to them as a model. We can see in them the spiritual motivation of their fraternal life. Without such

spiritual motivation, the search for union is perhaps illusory: "There can be neither union nor peace where God does not reside" (MD 77,2). One could say that these early Christian communities are a good example of an ideal community.

3. The example of the first Christian communities

De La Salle frequently recalls the fraternal life of the first disciples and the first Christian communities when encouraging his Brothers to live an evangelical life. He recommends them explicitly as models in his meditations: "You should remember that the members of a community should be animated with the same sentiments as the first Christians, who had but one heart and one soul" (MF 113,2 quoting Ac 4,32).

Even in the first version of the Rule, De La Salle writes: "In this Institute there will always be shown and preserved a true community spirit. All the exercises will be performed in common from morning till night. [...] They will all make recreation together, and also they will all go on walks together on holidays" (RC 3,1 -3). Elsewhere, he reminds the Brothers: "The Brothers will possess nothing of their own, all will be in common in every house" (RC 17,1). What De La Salle proposes here is the life of the first Christians, in which everything was held in common. This is the "See how they love one another" which should bear witness to our commitment to Christ. De La Salle adds: "This is what St Paul recommends to the faithful in his Epistles, and this likewise is what was remarked in the Apostles and the first disciples of Our Lord, for St Luke records in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that they had one heart and one soul" (MD 39,3 quoting Ac 4,32).

4. The union between De La Salle and the Brothers

De La Salle was the first to commit himself totally to this fraternal life and to this demanding union. From the moment he brought the first teachers into his house and began to live with them, he established a true fraternal relationship, which was free of any oppressive hierarchical structure, and in which he shared on an equal footing. If he resigned his canonry it was in order to become like them. His biographer Blain puts the following words into the mouth of the Founder;

"I have no right to speak to them of perfection, as I did when referring to poverty, if I am not poor myself; nor of trust in Providence, if I have resources to ensure I do not become destitute" (CL 7,191).

The Brothers realised that their Founder was putting himself into the same position as themselves. Although the Brothers recognised the Founder as their superior, their attachment for him showed that they considered him as their true brother. It is easy to understand why all the attempts to replace De La Salle as superior met with great opposition from the Brothers. They were attached to him because he was a friend, as well as because he was their superior and an irreplaceable guide.

All the biographers always stressed the cordial relationship which existed between De La Salle and his Brothers. He tried to be pleasant even with the most unpleasant of his Brothers. He showed great solicitude for them by helping them in their difficulties, when they were sick, and when they were dying. He travelled great distances under difficult circumstances to be at their bedside. As Blain wrote: "He loved all his Brothers tenderly, and showed more affection to those who seemed the least pleasant" (CL 8,375).

The letters, more than anything else, reveal De La Salle's sympathetic concern for his little flock. They deal with the details of everyday life and the smallest needs of the Brothers: "I was quite upset to hear of your illness but am happy that God has brought you back to health" (LA 26,2). "I write as cordially as I can and write nothing but for your good" (LA 46,1). "We will have to get a pair of breeches made for you, if you need them. I will see that you are given what you need" (LA 49,10). "I am quite distressed to hear of the illness that you are suffering, my very dear Brother. We must try to find some way of remedying this" (LA 12,1). "Do, please, try to have an engaging manner, and make it one of your chief occupations to bring about union among your Brothers" (LI 71,7).

5. De La Salle's testament

On the two occasions when illness brought him close to death, De La Salle did not fail to recommend union in community to his Brothers, saying that it was one of the essential conditions of vitality and continued existence.

When he was seriously ill in 1690 and seemed to be close to death, he made a recommendation to the

Brothers gathered at his bedside, a recommendation, Blain tells us, "that his heart often placed on his lips": "I recommend to you great union and great obedience" (CL 7,306).

Likewise in April 1719, when he was at death's door, De La Salle drew up his testament in which, once again, he recommends his Brothers, with equal insistence, "to have an intimate union among themselves" (CL 8,173), and total submission to the Church.

6. Jesus Christ present in the midst of the Brothers

De LaSalle's intentions were not simply pragmatic. He did not recommend union simply because it promoted stability in the community, but also because in some way it was the reason for Christ's presence in the midst of the Brothers. De La Salle was completely convinced that Christ was present in a community gathered together in his name. He speaks of this presence as a source of inspiration in mental prayer.

Jesus is also a living presence that animates community life: "He is in the midst of them in order to give them his Holy Spirit and to direct them by him in all of their actions and in all of their conduct. He is in the midst of them to bring them together, accomplishing himself what he asked for them from his Father before his death, by these words in St John: 'May they be one in us, as you, Father, and I are one, that they may become perfectly one'. That is to say, so one and united, having only the same Spirit, which is the Spirit of God, that they may never become disunited" (CL 14,9 = EM 2,26-27).³

The following paragraph, in which De La Salle speaks of the unity of life centred on Jesus, is very rich and deserves to be reproduced in full as a choice example of De La Salle's writing. As this is not possible, we limit ourselves to quoting a passage in which De La Salle offers his Brothers a particularly striking image: "For Jesus Christ is in relation to them [the Brothers] like the sun which not only communicates to plants the power to produce, but also gives to their fruits the goodness and perfection, which are more or less great in proportion to their greater or lesser exposure to the sun's rays. It is in this way that the Brothers perform their exercises and the actions in keeping with their state, with more or less perfection in proportion to their greater or lesser contact, conformity and union with Jesus Christ" (CL 14,10 = EM 2,32).

Finally, De La Salle speaks of a particular fruit which results from the presence of Jesus in the midst of the Brothers, and this is a close union with Jesus Christ, who lives in us, and in whom we live. He suggests the following prayer: "Give me also the grace, through your presence in our midst, assembled in order to pray to you, to have an intimate union of mind and heart with my Brothers" (CL 14,11f = EM 2,37,2).

Naturally, De La Salle reminds the Brothers that their relations with one another should be based on the fact that Jesus is present in each one of them. As the Rule said: "The Brothers will have a cordial affection for one another, but they will not give anyone a sign or proof of special affection, through respect for Our Lord, whom they should honour equally in all, as being animated by him and living according to his spirit" (RC 13,1). "The respect they will have for God living in them" (their Brothers) will be a source of mutual esteem, and cause them to consider fellow Brothers superior to themselves (RC 13,6).

7. The practice of fraternal life

7.1. OBSTACLES TO UNION

In terms of everyday life, union which results from cohesion and mutual acceptance in community implies the need for a good deal of realism, something which is not lacking in De La Salle. He tells his Brothers that he knows from experience that "a community without charity and without union is hell" (MD 65,1). In this hell, nothing else is heard apart from complaints, murmuring and slander, all of which causes great trouble and disquietude. His diagnosis reveals great perspicacity: "The first reason why there is sometimes a lack of union in community is that some seek to be preferred to their companions, from a purely human consideration" (MF 91,2).

7.2. FACTORS PROMOTING UNION

Setting aside purely human views is, therefore, one of the possible ways of strengthening fraternal union. The first Rule prescribed attitudes which promoted union and did away with sources of friction.⁴ Union is strengthened also by positive attitudes. Brothers need to strive for it constantly and speak of it willingly, as a goal worth pursuing. Regularity (CL 15,159 = R 15,3,1) and obedience considered as a virtue which establish order and union⁵ (MD 7,2) are two powerful factors which promote union in community.

There are also other virtues whose presence helps to create union among Brothers. In particular, there is gentleness: "By it [gentleness] we succeed in preserving union with all our Brothers" (MD 65,2). Another important virtue is patience, which is shown by an unconditional acceptance of others: "The way to maintain union in a community, despite these diversities of character, is to suffer each other's defects in a charitable spirit, to be disposed to condone our Brothers' faults" (MD 74,1).⁶ De La Salle never hesitates to speak frankly about the conditions union imposes: "If, then, we have real charity towards our Brothers, it is not permissible to say 'I cannot suffer this from so-and-so', or, with regard to another, 'such a thing is not to be tolerated', or again, 'he must put up with my ill-humour, or with my weakness'. To speak thus would show that we did not endure everything from everybody" (MD 65,1).

What De La Salle says reminds M. Sauvage and M. Campos of Bonhoeffer's words in his *Community Life: to carry is to endure* (AEP 415).

8. The practice of fraternal forgiveness

The writings of De La Salle include The Ten Commandments of the Society in rhyming couplets (RC 16,18). The second couplet refers to fraternal union:

"You will love all your Brothers cordially and always".

In addition to all the means to promote union already mentioned, which reveal a shrewd understanding of human psychology and sharp spiritual insight, De La Salle adds another, suggested to him by Christ's prayer, St Paul's teaching and by monastic practice: the exercise of mutual forgiveness.

M. Sauvage and M. Campos comment as follows on this practice: "During this exercise of pardon, the words of St Paul are quoted: 'Bear the burden of one another's failings, then you will be fulfilling the law of Christ'. The purpose of this is to recall that mutual support is not only passive. It implies openness towards others to help them in their pursuit of God. Its purpose is also to draw attention to the spirit in which this exercise should be performed: not to work off one's aggressiveness or to settle scores, but to offer active support to others and to assist them spiritually" (AEP 415 quoting Ga 6,2).

De La Salle also commented on the words of St Paul which inspired this exercise of pardon: "When he [God] placed you in community, he imposed on you a burden which is heavy to bear. And what is this burden if not the defects of your Brothers. Yet, no matter how heavy this may be, St Paul insists that we must bear it. He says: 'Bear the burden of one another's failings, then you will be fulfilling the law of Christ'. Have you grasped this lesson? Have you understood it perfectly? Then practise it. God himself gives you the example, for he has suffered untold outrages from you, and daily continues so to suffer. You have committed many sins against him, though you owe him gratitude for so many graces. Yet, if you have recourse to him, the heavenly Father will forgive you your trespasses, but only on condition that you forgive your fellow men theirs. You must bear no ill-will for the offences they have given you or may still give you" (MD 74,3 quoting Mt 6,14).

This commentary explains also why De La Salle considered another exercise to be an important external support of the community. This was the weekly exercise when Brothers told their fellow Brothers publicly of their faults. With this was associated the daily practice of accusing oneself in public of one's exterior faults against the Rule, and the weekly account of one's conscience to the Brother Director. All these practices were intended to help the Brothers "to preserve a great purity of heart" (CL 15,67 = R 10,2,21).

This purity of heart is strengthened in particular by not harbouring resentment when one is publicly told of one's faults, and by the correction of those faults.

Another means De La Salle prescribed in order to increase fraternal union was the annual exercise of pardon on Holy Thursday. One could say that De La Salle, already in his day, had the same insight (although expressed differently) as Jean Vanier, who saw community as "a place of pardon and celebration".

This exercise, already prescribed in the *Practice of the Daily Timetable*, was included in its original form in all the *Rules* from 1718 to 1967: "On Holy Thursday, immediately after dinner, chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 of the Gospel of St John will be read publicly. Next, the Brother Director will speak about the union that the Brothers should have and should

preserve among themselves. His talk will last till 2 o'clock. At 2 o'clock, the Brothers will take turns to ask pardon of one another, beginning with the Brother Director, for the trouble they have caused their Brothers and the bad example they have given them" (CL 25,125f = RC 30,20,30).⁸

9. Union and prayer

Prayer is responsible to a great extent for the quality of the union that exists among the Brothers. "When we are assembled [...] for whatever [...] exercise it maybe [...] we are in Our Lord's company. [...] He is in the midst of the Brothers [...] to bring them together [...] having only the same Spirit, which is the Spirit of God" (CL 14,9 = EM 2,25-27).⁹

De La Salle recalls the importance of promoting union by the power of prayer: "Union in community is truly a precious gem. [...] When this is lost, all is lost. Hence if you wish your community to continue, preserve this virtue carefully" (MF 91,2).

Not only must the Brothers make an effort to maintain it, but they must also ask God for it: "There is nothing you should pray for with greater insistence than union of heart and mind with your Brothers. [...] Ask, therefore, the Lord of all hearts to make yours one with those of your Brothers, in that of Jesus" (MD 39,3).

And so, in the prayers the Founder composed for the Brothers, and which continued to be recited in the Institute till the Office of the Church was adopted, the Brothers would say each day: "Give us, O my Saviour Jesus, the perfection you required of us in your holy Gospel, and that union which you asked the Eternal Father to grant us, before you died".¹⁰

10. Union and association

De La Salle uses the noun "union" or the verb "to unite" when speaking of commitment to the work of education: "I promise to unite myself [...] with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who are associated...". These words from the 1694 formula of vows recall those of the special vow made in 1691: "We make vows of association and union". The union spoken of here is that of attachment and membership in the pursuit of a common goal.

Union here means association. But this is not enough unless this association is inspired by a spirit, which consists in the pursuit of closer relations with others, governed by respect for the individual, in order to fulfil Jesus' law of love, and strive to bring about the unity he asked of his Father for his disciple

¹ De La Salle bases himself also on the teaching of St Paul.

² This text was read on Holy Thursday at a community meeting. The Director would comment on it in his talk to the Brothers on the union they should have. It was also part of the prescribed reading during the annual retreat. De La Salle wrote a meditation on this subject for the vigil of the Ascension (MD 39).

³ De La Salle points out the various effects of this presence and some of the reasons for it; "Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers in their exercises, in order to give them the spirit of their state, [...] to teach them the truths and maxims of the Gospel, [...] in order to commit them to making the practice of the same maxims of the Gospel uniform in their society, in order that they may always maintain an entire and perfect union among them" (CL 14,9 = EM 2,28f).

⁴ The Brothers will not give anyone "any sign or proof of special affection, through respect for Our Lord whom they must honour equally in everyone" (RC 13,1). "They will show esteem for the Brothers, and the sincere, true and interior union they have with them" (RC 13,12).

⁵ The verb *est* (is) in the text of the 1731 edition, considered to be the first, has been corrected by hand to read *mest* or *met* (puts, establishes). De La Salle regularly used the expression *mettre ordre* (establish order).

⁶ De La Salle adds: "As soon as something occurs which you find hard to bear, you fail to show charity towards your Brother and union with him" (MD 74,2).

⁷ In a letter, the date and intended recipient of which are unknown, De La Salle, quoting from his own writings, a rare occurrence, refers to the 7th of these command-

ments : "You will mortify your mind and your senses frequently" (LC 94,3; cf. R 3,1).

⁸ Our reference is to the 1718 *Common Rules*, but the *Daily Timetable*, which is thought to date from as early as 1682, bears witness to the antiquity of the text. De La Salle provided a formula for the Brothers to use: "My very dear Brother, I humbly beg your pardon for all the trouble I have caused you, and for all the bad example I have given you since I have had the happiness of living with you in community, and I beg you to pardon me and ask God also to pardon me". The Director is asked to pardon disobedience towards him, rather than bad example.

This exercise served to put the past in order and mark the beginning of a period of renewed union.

⁹ "De La Salle's teaching on fraternal union is rooted in mystical realism: it is the Spirit of Jesus Christ who creates unity in a Christian community with its diversity of members, just as he is the personal link between the Father and the Son" (CAMPOS & SAUVAGE, CL 50,210. Cf. *Encountering...*, in bibliography).

¹⁰ Taken from morning prayer: "My God, I recognize myself unworthy..." Cf. *Manual of Piety* or, in the present volume, the article on *Prayer* (Insert).

Complementary themes

Association

Community

Goodness

Love-Charity

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Br Gilles BEAUDET

98. VIRTUES OF THE TEACHER

Summary

1. A list of 12 virtues.

2. "Explanation of the 12 virtues" by Br Agathon

2.1 .The work 2.2.Its success.

3. Different ways of understanding these virtues

3.1 .From a psychological point of view 3.2.Picking out anything particularly enlightening 3.3.Other ways.

4. Limitations of these 12 virtues: De La Salle and teachers

4.1 .Promoting the dignity of teachers 4.2.Making them assume responsibilities 4.3.Training the teachers
4.4.Improving pupil-teacher relations 4.5.Ending the isolation of teachers.

1. A LIST OF 12 VIRTUES

Two of the works written by De La Salle, the *Collection of Short Treatises*, published in 1711, and the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, printed in 1720, include a list of the "Twelve virtues of a Good Teacher", but do not provide any commentary. The virtues are listed in the following order: "gravity, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety and generosity".

This list is given without any explanation or context. This poses a certain number of questions:

-Why is this list of virtues added to the end of the text of the 1720 edition of the *Conduct*, when it does not appear in the 1706 manuscript of this work?

- When the Brothers asked the Founder to revise the text of the *Conduct* at the Chapter of 1717, did they ask him also to write a treatise about these virtues, but he was unable to do so before his death in 1719?

It is worth noting also that this list re-appears, but in only a shortened version in a text subsequently published under the title: *Formation of New Teachers, or Part III of the Conduct of Schools*. A shortened list of virtues appears also in the *Rule of the Trainer of New*

Teachers (Avignon ms.), which is divided into two sections:

- "Removing from new teachers what they have and should not have.

- "Providing them with what they do not have, but which is very necessary for them to have".

This second section explains in detail the ten attitudes that new teachers are expected to have. It includes only five of the 12 virtues: gravity, wisdom, prudence, vigilance and zeal.

But, as we shall see later, these 12 virtues do not reflect adequately nor fully De La Salle's views on the training of teachers. These views matured over a long period, from 1679 to 1719, and earned for him the title of "Founder of teachers" long before Pope Pius XII proclaimed him "Patron before God of all educators of children and youth". The purpose of this article is not to examine closely each of the virtues, but rather to consider their significance in the history of the Institute. For a more detailed treatment of this question, the reader is referred to other articles in the *Lasallian Themes* series: *Gentleness* (vol. 1), *Silence, Vigilance* (vol. 2), *Humility, Piety and Zeal*, in the present volume.

2. "EXPLANATION OF THE 12 VIRTUES" BY BR AGATHON

2.1. The work

In 1785, the Superior General of the *Brothers of the Christian Schools*, Br Agathon (Joseph Gouilleux, 1731-1798), published a short work entitled *Explanation of the 12 Virtues of a Good Teacher*.

Brother Agathon begins by considering whether to examine the virtues in a particular order or by groups, but finally decides to examine each virtue in turn in the order in which it traditionally appears.

The work begins with an introduction. There follow 12 chapters of unequal length, and the work ends with a conclusion. The insistence on gentleness is worth noting.

Br Agathon writes: "The plan [of this work] has been given to us by M. de La Salle, our venerable Founder. We have composed it on the basis of his principles and maxims. Any material taken from elsewhere comes from only the most esteemed authors. [...] The Virtues, or what is the same thing in this context, the qualities of a good teacher are...".

This brief extract from the introduction shows that Brother Agathon felt he was expressing the views of De La Salle, as they were understood in his days. The structure of each of the 12 chapters is identical:

- (a) A brief definition of the virtue to begin with: "The... is a virtue which..."
- (b) How this virtue differs from the others; its connection with the others; the group to which it belongs.
- (c) Reflections and considerations.
- (d) Practical application, including concrete examples.
- (e) Failings or defects opposed to this virtue.
- (f) Conclusion based on two or three quotations referring to this virtue, generally taken from the Scriptures or the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

In this short educational work, the author offers some clear, sober and practical observations accessible not only to the Brothers, for whom it was primarily intended, but also to all the Christian teachers of his days. The *Explanation* reveals an author who has experience, competence in his own field, who presents Lasallian teaching and practice with authority, and who offers a text that is easy to read and which will not tire the reader.

2.2. Its success

After the French Revolution, the work aroused sufficient interest for it to be re-printed several times in France and in Belgium. In these subsequent editions, certain changes were made which altered appreciably its presentation and content. The FSC Generalate archives possess copies of editions produced in 1808, 1815, 1822, 1838, 1845, 1856, 1875 and 1896.

The *Explanation of the 12 Virtues of a Good Teacher* had some success outside of France also. Within 12 years of the first edition, a translation appeared in Italy under a rather ponderous title: *Manuale dei Maestri di Scuola o sia le dodici Virtù di un Buon Maestro, esposte e spiegate per servire di guida a quelli che s'adoperano nell'educazione cristiana delta gioventù...*, 1797).

The virtues or qualities of teachers, especially Christian teachers, were a topic treated by numerous writers in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Such works indulged in a great deal of moralising, but at the same time reflected the high opinion in which the work of the schoolmaster was held.

3. DIFFERENT WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING THESE VIRTUES

The way we see the person and the function of the teacher nowadays is so different from what is suggested by the list of the 12 virtues, that we find ourselves wondering about the meaning of the list left to us by De La Salle. Already in the 19th century, various commentators tried to arrange the virtues under a variety of headings.

3.1. They can be considered from a psychological point of view and the 12 chapters arranged in the following way:

- gravity, wisdom and humility are qualities teachers should cultivate quite independently of their contact with children;

- prudence, patience, reserve, silence and gentleness likewise are virtues a teacher should cultivate with a view to his own personal development, although they are more directly relevant than those previously mentioned to his work as a teacher of children;

- zeal, vigilance and generosity are virtues that should

be cultivated as being particularly necessary for teaching;

- piety is a virtue that can give all the others a spiritual dimension which enables them to lose their profane character and become Christian virtues.

To use more modern terminology, we can say that these 12 virtues or qualities promote the following three attitudes:

- interiority, personal enrichment and freedom;
- self-mastery, resulting in a balanced personality and ability to discern;
- commitment of the teacher to his work of education.

3.2. Another way of looking at the *Explanation* is not to see in it a progressive or systematic development of a single line of argument. Instead, one can read through the various chapters, **picking out anything** which, even nowadays, is **particularly enlightening**. Such an approach reveals valuable observations regarding three areas: culture, professional com-

petence and educational approach:

- basic culture, renewal, ability to communicate;
- professional competence, choice of life, enthusiasm and diligence, pedagogical training, order, a sense of proportion, justice, respect, balanced and serene behaviour, a vigilant presence, firmness.
- educational approach, model of lifestyle, patience, authority, balance, simplicity in relationships.

3.3. There are various **other ways** of interpreting this list of 12 virtues, depending on one's point of view or on the particular point one wants to prove.

The language of the *Explanation* is, of course, old-fashioned and incapable of expressing the dynamic and creative pedagogy of today, nor the type of relationship we expect teachers to have, as we approach a new millennium. It is pointless also bemoaning the fact that words have lost a wealth of meaning as a result of the semantic evolution that has taken place since the Age of Enlightenment.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THESE 12 VIRTUES: DE LA SALLE AND TEACHERS

One cannot fail to wonder to what extent Br Agathon's work really reflects De La Salle's thinking, knowing as we do, the personality and responsibilities of the author.

From his earliest years as founder of schools for "the children of the artisans and the poor", De La Salle had to face the same major difficulty all his predecessors had had to face: the wretched situation of schoolteachers. It would be impossible, in this short article, to go into the reasons and consequences of this wretched state, but suffice it to say that all modern educational historians agree that this was so. Without trained, competent and highly motivated teachers, it was not possible to provide children with a true education. De La Salle's inspired choice, among others, was to concentrate primarily on improving the situation of the teachers. An analysis of his achievements and of his writings, reveals 5 areas on which he concentrated his attention and efforts:

4.1. Promoting the dignity of teachers in a society in which their image was very negative, and teaching itself was a despised occupation. There is an extraordinary difference between the contempt in which teachers were held and what we read in De LaSalle's

writings on the ministry of the Christian teacher who, called by God to cooperate in his plan of salvation, becomes a minister of Jesus Christ and of his Church, continuing the work of the Apostles, bishops and saints who preached the Gospel!

4.2. Making them assume responsibilities by helping them to become aware of the importance of their work for the pupils and their parents, for the good of the Church and of the State, in accordance with God's plan of salvation. De La Salle never tires of reminding his Brothers of this in his *Meditations*.

4.3. However, to attain this dignity, the teachers had to be trained. De La Salle set about training the Brothers in the novitiate, and the lay teachers in the "seminary" created for this purpose. He organised a programme of initial formation adapted to the needs of both Brothers and lay teachers. For the Brothers above all, but not exclusively, he integrated a form of continuous formation into the "community exercises", including daily supervision by the School Inspector, and educational meetings during the annual holidays.

4.4. Improving pupil-teacher relations and organising the school so that each pupil received indi-

vidual attention. This personal relationship with each pupil was characterised by cordiality, and by the fact that each pupil was given work adapted to his age and ability.

4.5. Ending the isolation of teachers, who were often compelled to teach alone, not in contact with other teachers, and without any opportunity to com-

pare their experience with that of colleagues. It was a great innovation to take on schools only if they included several classes, and always to work in them "together and by association". In this way, De La Salle succeeded in introducing stability to the teachers working in these schools, and in contributing to the improvement of their image in society, and to a change in the status of schools and children.

These final considerations go beyond what might be considered as the narrow confines of the "12 Virtues ". They should help the reader of Br Agathon's treatise to come away with a more complete picture of the way De La Salle envisaged the Christian teacher. If this list of virtues cannot be considered as a point of reference for us today, the commentary on it can at least stimulate reflection and encourage teachers to deepen their understanding of the apostolic ministry of education and to update it. It would be useful, therefore, to give some attention to the numerous tactful and practical considerations regarding the work of education in Br Agathon's text.

Complementary themes

Christian teacher
Correction
Example-Edification
Guardian angels
Gentleness

Goodness
Gratuity
Hearts (to touch)
Humility
Love-Charity

Piety
Pupil-teacher relationship
Reward of the teacher
Silence
Vigilance
Zeal

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99. ZEAL

Summary

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John Baptist de La Salle was not only a model of ecclesiastical zeal: by committing himself with the Brothers to the establishment of the Christian Schools, he helped them to base their zeal on a living faith. As a consequence, most of his writings, while intended for the Brothers, can be applied also to Christian teachers in general. When the need arises, we shall point out where he is referring specifically to the Brothers, and where, because of a change in context, what he says needs to be interpreted somewhat differently nowadays.

1. MEANING OF THE WORD "ZEAL"

1.1. In dictionaries

According to Bailly's Greek dictionary, zeal means "ebullition", "boiling", and hence, "ardour" and "emulation". Zeal can become "rivalry", that is, the object of envy, hatred or jealousy.

According to the 1704 edition of the Trévoux dictionary, published by the Jesuits, zeal is an ardent affection for something (*studium ardens*). It is used especially, when speaking of holy things, of pure and

enlightened attachment to the service of God. It can refer to the high ideals of country and religion: zeal for the glory of God, for the faith; zeal for the altar, for the salvation of souls. The dictionary speaks also of rash zeal not tempered by prudence; of blind zeal which does not seek the truth. The best arrangement can be spoiled by excessive zeal.

In poetic language, zeal is used to signify intense affection and ardent love for a cherished person or for

a friend. "There is Christian zeal, which Paul, as the friend of the Spouse, shows for the Churches entrusted to him. The purity which he defends in them is the preservation from all false doctrine" (*Vocabulaire de théologie biblique*, p. 1136).

1.2. A remark about its pejorative connotation

Sometimes "zeal" is considered to have a negative sense. The French expression *faire du zèle*, literally "to act zealously", means to show excessive or inopportune eagerness. In De La Salle's writings, zeal is never used in this sense, although it is by his biographers. Dom François Élie Maillefer writes: "M. Nyel's

zeal harmful to the schools. [...] His zeal consisted solely in trying to set up establishments without concerning himself with their improvement. Because he was obliged to move constantly from place to place in pursuit of his aims, he was unable to give the necessary attention to the problems which arose in his newly founded schools" (CL 6,39).

Jean Baptiste Blain, in his turn, speaks of "the bitter zeal of the zealots of the old strict ways, [...] these false Jeremiahs who accuse [...] the Church of laxity". These are the terms in which he speaks of the Jansenists, whose activities he condemned in vigorous terms in his various writings (CL 8,207f).

2. DE LA SALLE'S ZEAL

2.1. The views of the first biographers'

Brother **Bernard** divides his life of De La Salle into four parts, each part concentrating on a particular virtue. The second part, dealing with "the establishment of the Institute" (CL 4,5), concentrates on zeal. Already in the first part, devoted to De La Salle's "childhood and accession to Holy Orders", and illustrating his piety, Bernard mentions the zeal of the future founder several times. He imitated his patron saint "by his zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls" (*id.* 31). Under Nicolas Roland's guidance, "he began to have great zeal for the salvation of souls" (13). When he was a young canon, his zeal led him to cause a priest to leave the town because he was failing in his duties (17). It was his zeal for the glory of God that inspired him to lodge the teachers in the same house (36) and later in his own home (37), overcoming the repugnance he felt in their presence: Pious persons were impressed by De La Salle's virtue, by "his zeal, his humility and his detachment from all earthly things" (79). The opening of the seminary for country teachers was "an opportunity for him to exercise his zeal and his charity" (85).

The moral portrait with which **F.E. Maillefer** ends the biography of his uncle emphasises his zeal for the instruction of youth: "He devoted his whole life tirelessly to it, and left his Brothers of the Schools and all those who knew him clear signs of his zeal and of all the virtues appropriate to an ecclesiastic" (CL 6,256). When he had to replace one of the Brothers in the

école St Jacques in Rheims, he put on his habit: "Several persons, including his friends, were convinced he was taking his zeal too far" (*id.* 72). During the famine of 1693, the Brothers reproached De La Salle for feeding too many people. His reply was: "If you are afraid that too great a number will overwhelm you, throw me out!" (112). The Carbon manuscript says that De La Salle replied "with zeal", while the Rheims manuscript notes "with fire". His determined zeal over a period of three months led to the conversion of a young Dutchman to Catholicism (122). His zeal for the glory of God made him open the boarding school for the Irish (134).

In his fourth book, *The spirit, sentiments and virtues of M. de La Salle*, **J.B. Blain** devotes almost 40 pages to his zeal, considering that "the second sign of his eminent charity [was] what he did for God". He adds: "The same zeal for the glory of God which burned in this holy priest, inspired him with a holy enthusiasm for the salvation of souls, for these two aims were inseparable" (CL 8,338). The zeal of the Founder of the Brothers was not limited to the schools. The biographer speaks of his giving a mission in a rural parish (*id.* 337), converting sinners (351f), Protestants (345f), unworthy priests (351f)... But it was, in particular, by associating himself with the schoolteachers, and by living like them, that he showed "his truly pure zeal, which is seen only in Jesus Christ, in his Apostles and in those who wish to imitate them" (355). And hence also his zeal for the sanctification of the Brothers (363).

"He zeal often led him to visit [classes] to examine, them and to see with his own eyes what happened in them. He gave his attention to both the pupils and the teachers" (359). And so when De La Salle speaks of the zeal of the Christian educator he is well qualified to do so.

2.2. Anonymous corroboration

The introductions to the first edition of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, and to the first edition of the *Meditations for Sundays and Feasts*, both say how these books reflect "the ardent zeal with which [this holy priest] burned for the instruction of children" (CL 13,5).

"An educated and very enlightened person, who was kind enough to take the trouble to examine at leisure the entire manuscript of these meditations before having them printed, admired in them with astonishment the ardent zeal of this apostolic person revealed in his simple and guileless language [...]. This holy priest has unwittingly revealed in this book the true spirit which animated him and which guided him in all his actions" (CL 12,1).

2.3. His own example

And so, for De La Salle, zeal was an attitude to life, based on his rich personal experience. He lived his life of faith intensely, and from the moment he

decided to undertake the work of the Christian Schools (1679-1682), he committed his own life and his whole future to it. He allowed himself to be moved to compassion by the way in which the children of the artisans and the poor in the French society of his day were abandoned. After his meeting with Adrien Nyel, he found himself involved in the establishment of the first schools for boys in Rheims. Step by step, he committed himself further to the newly born work of the Christian Schools, responding to what he saw as a personal call from God. In one commitment after another, he dedicated himself totally to this work and consecrated his entire life to it. He used his intelligence and his determination to ensure that the schools were well run, and that the Brothers who taught in them were trained. De La Salle recalls all this in the *Memoir on the Beginnings*, quoted by Blain: "God who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness and who is not accustomed to imposing his will on man, wishing to make me take complete charge of the schools, did so in an imperceptible manner over a long period of time, in such a way that one commitment led me to another, without my having foreseen any of this at the beginning" (CL 7,169).

De La Salle was convinced that there was "a very great need" for the Christian Schools for the service of the poor (RC 1,4), and that the efforts to strengthen them and to ensure they were well run, accomplished at the same time "the work of God" (CL 10,115 = EP 3,0,8).

3. THE ZEAL OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

3.1. A tentative definition

Taking his inspiration from Jesus and the Apostles, De La Salle sees zeal as an intense feeling — ardour, affection, passion — that the Brother of the Christian Schools has for a specific goal: the salvation of the children God has confided to him. In practical terms, his task consists in making them good citizens and good Christians (MF 160,3). This involves teaching them catechism, forming their conscience on the basis of Gospel values, initiating them into the Christian life and, at the same time, instructing and educating them, so as to enable them to exercise a profession, and to take their place in society.

In order to achieve this, the Brother has at his disposal the ideal means: the Christian school. His zeal

leads him to devote all his talents and energy to the Christian education of his pupils, and to organise his teaching in such a way that these aims are attained in an efficient manner.

Zeal is an interior force which infuses energy into all that a Brother does (LA 16,7; MF 87,1; MF 96,3); a force which gives meaning to the multiplicity of activities which fill his life: his prayer, his training and his professional work as a teacher, educator and catechist (CL 15,39 = R 8,2,21).

3.2. In order "to procure the salvation of children"

Zeal is a virtue which characterises the Christian educator. With gravity, silence, humility, patience,

wisdom, prudence, reserve, gentleness, vigilance, piety and generosity, zeal is part of the image De La Salle has of the good teacher (R 5).³

But this is no ordinary virtue. Together with the spirit of faith, zeal is a primary characteristic of the spirituality and life of the Brother of the Christian Schools and of his Institute: "Secondly, the spirit of their Institute consists in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children, and for bringing them up in the fear of God, inducing them to preserve their innocence if they have not lost it, and inspiring them with a great aversion and horror for sin, and whatever might cause them to lose purity.

"In order to enter into this spirit, the Brothers of the Society shall strive by prayer, instruction, and by their vigilance and good conduct in school, to procure the salvation of the children confided to their care, bringing them up in piety and in a truly Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel" (RC 2,9-10).

Zeal, therefore, is an essential trait of the Lasallian teacher's spirituality, whether he is a Brother or a lay person. To the extent that men and women teachers consider their work "as a holy ministry", taking their inspiration from the spirituality of St John Baptist de La Salle, their zeal will become an increasingly important dimension of their lives and an interior source of energy. This is what gives meaning and unity to their professional work.⁴

When we speak of Christian educators, we always refer to Lasallian educators as a whole: men, women, Brothers and lay persons. By doing so, we do not mean to deny or minimise the differences that exist between Brothers, who are consecrated religious, and lay persons living in the world.

3.3. What is the source of this interior force?

1. Its source is faith, the spirit of faith, which makes us see young people and society from the point of view of a God who loves his people and desires its salvation.

"The Christian educator, imbued with the spirit of faith, contemplates in his prayer the mystery of Christ, the unique plan of God, a God who reveals himself in life and wishes to save all men in Christ. He sees the needs of young people, he participates intimately in God's salvific will and offers himself to the Father,

in the Spirit and through Christ, in order to contribute to the salvation of these young people, and to help them live according to the spirit of Christianity every moment of their lives".⁵

2. It is inseparable from the conviction that **it is God who established the Christian Schools.**

"One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner, and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters: some are taken up with their material needs and the support of their family; others, under the constant concern of earning the necessities of life for themselves and their children, cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as Christians. In his providential care, God has appointed others to take the place of fathers and mothers. He sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and of his mysteries" (MR 193,2).

God himself calls the teacher and chooses him for the "ministry" of education (MF 140,2; 146,2; 177,1; MR 197,3). His daily work in school is an expression of God's will, and is very useful for the Church. It is a great grace for the educator to have been chosen to educate young people.

So the teacher sees himself, in his relationship with the children, as a "minister of God" and an "ambassador of Jesus Christ" (MR 201,1-2; 193,1; MF 131,2). His profession as a teacher is rooted in the call of God, whose work must be accomplished. Because his work is a vocation and confers on him great dignity, he must prepare himself for it and devote himself to his pupils with generosity and great zeal.

"Since you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ himself. He wants his disciples to see him in you and receive your teaching as if he were teaching them. They must be convinced that the truth of Jesus Christ comes from your mouth, that it is only in his name that you teach, that he has given you authority over them. They are a letter which Christ dictates to you, which you write each day in their hearts, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God" (MR 195,2 quoting 2 Co 4,5).

"Let it be clear, then, in all your relations with the children who are entrusted to you, that you look upon yourself as ministers of God, acting with love, with a

sincere and true zeal, accepting with much patience the difficulties you have to suffer. [...] The zeal that inspires you is meant to give you these dispositions, recognising that it is God who has called you, who has chosen you for this ministry, and who has sent you to work in his vineyard. Fulfil your ministry, then, with all the affection of your heart, working entirely for him" (MR 201,1).

3. This force is inseparable from the desire to love the children and young people as God loves them.

"You must imitate God himself to some extent, for he so loved the souls he created that, when he saw them involved in sin and unable to free themselves, his zeal and desire for their salvation led him to send his own Son to rescue them from this wretched state" (MR 201,3).

It is in this sense that De La Salle offers the Christian educator Christ, his Apostles and saints as models they should imitate. He invites him to deepen his faith — the source of his zeal and the guiding principle of his spirituality — by his personal prayer, by contemplating the model life led by Jesus Christ and the saints (MR 201,2; MD 59,1; MF 98,3; 99,1; 102,1; 109,3).

Because the zeal of the Christian educator is rooted in faith and in God's own love for children and young people, it is ardent, active, lively (MR 201,3), tireless (MF 181,2; 109,3) and efficacious (MR 202,3). The teacher devotes himself totally to the work of educating his pupils, and especially, of educating them in the faith. He sacrifices himself for them, and is prepared to dedicate his whole life to this work (MR 201,3).

"The zeal you are obliged to have in your ministry must be so active and so lively that you are able to tell the parents of the children what is said in Scripture: «Give us their souls, keep everything else for yourselves», that is, what we want is to work for the salvation of their souls; this is the only reason why we have undertaken the responsibility to guide and teach them. [...] For this had to be the kind of ardent zeal you had for the salvation of those you teach, when you were led to sacrifice yourself and to dedicate your whole life to giving these children a Christian education, and procuring for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next" (MR 201,3).

3.4. A virtue that has to be nourished and has to grow daily

Zeal is a virtue and an attitude which the Brother and the Lasallian teacher have to nourish and develop in themselves every day. To help them do this, De La Salle suggests some practical means to develop their personal relationship with God and improve their professional work as educators.

In the first place, according to De La Salle, the most important thing the Christian teacher has to do is to fill himself with God and his love in his prayer, and to live according to the Gospel. Zeal is a grace given by God, as is also the salvation of the children entrusted to him. For this reason, it is important to ask God for it with great insistence every day in prayer: "Beseech God to confer on you today the same grace as he gave the Apostles, so that after filling you with his Spirit for your own sanctification, he may confer it on you for the sanctification of others also" (MD 43,3).

The Brother nourishes his zeal by his personal relationship with God. In silence and in prayer, he fills himself with God and his love, following the example of St Remi who showed great zeal for the good of the Church: "Such is ordinarily the fruit of true retreat. Those who during it are filled with divine love, endeavour to share it with others when God, for the good of the Church, lays upon them the obligation of dealing with the world. It is then that these great men, filled with the Spirit of God, try with all possible earnestness to make others know and taste what they themselves experience; and animated with this zeal, they are very successful in helping a great number of souls to give themselves to God" (MF 171,2).

The Brother, like any other Christian educator, needs to base his life on Gospel values, and to preach by example throughout his life: "You are obliged by your state to teach the truths of the Gospel every day. Practise yourself what all Christians are held to comply with, before attempting to teach others to do so. If you do not have the special grace of being the Precursor of Jesus Christ, like St John [the Baptist], you have at least that of being his successor in his ministry. Be convinced that you will make it produce fruit in others only to the extent it has produced fruit in you" (MF 138,3).

In the second place, the Christian teacher has to take the most efficacious means he can to ensure that

his pupils are trained as Christians and citizens. The Brother must teach his pupils with great dedication, and constantly improve his own pedagogical skills and professional behaviour: "Your work requires you to exercise zeal not only for the good of the Church, but also for that of your country. Your pupils are already members of the State, and one day will be fully so. You will contribute to the good of the Church, when you make them true Christians, submissive to the teachings of the faith and the maxims of the Holy

Gospel. You will contribute to the good of your country by teaching them to read and write and everything else your ministry requires from an external point of view. However, you must join piety to your external efforts, otherwise your work will not be of much use" (MF 160,3).

This could hardly be better said. In what follows, we shall consider De La Salle's basic thesis in greater detail.

4. HOW DOES DE LA SALLE DEFINE A ZEALOUS TEACHER?

According to De La Salle, the zeal of a teacher is evident from his overall conduct. His whole person demonstrates it and it governs the way he is and the way he acts in his professional work. It has a direct influence on all his attitudes towards the pupils and on his relations with them, not only when he is teaching them catechism and educating them in the faith, but in all his work as an educator.

4.1. The integrated life of the Christian teacher

To understand this notion better, we need to bear in mind that De La Salle was convinced that "the person and life of the Brother" was characterised by "an absolute unity",⁶ a conviction that was the fruit of his faith-inspired contemplation.

The Brother sanctifies himself by never ceasing to deepen his spiritual life and his union with God in prayer and in the sacraments. At the same time, he does his daily work in school with competence, great zeal and total dedication.

De La Salle's personal experience of this integrated life enabled him to speak of it clearly and with authority, and led him to tell his Brothers that it was one of the most important characteristics of the spirituality he wished to share with them: "It is a good rule of conduct to make no distinction between the matters proper to our state and those which refer to our salvation and perfection. We can be certain that we can work out our salvation and acquire perfection in no better way than by performing the duties of our charge, provided that we accomplish them in view of the will of God" (CL 10,114 = EP 3,03).

"Make no distinction between the affairs of your

state and those of your salvation and your perfection" (CL 15,184 = R16,1,4).⁷

For the Lasallian educator, such an outlook on life and work opens up for him vast opportunities to fulfil himself personally and to achieve salvation. De La Salle shows his Brothers how closely their own salvation is bound up with that of their pupils: "Have you up to the present looked upon the salvation of your pupils as the matter for your own salvation during the whole time that they are under your guidance? You have exercises which are established for your own sanctification. If you have an ardent zeal for the salvation of those you are called to teach, you will not fail to perform them and relate them to this purpose. By doing so you will draw down on your students the graces needed to contribute to their salvation, and will ensure, by acting in this way, that God himself will take responsibility for yours" (MR 205,2).

4.2. Integrated education, the purpose of the "Christian Schools"

This approach to teaching cannot fail to integrate the way a person working with young people acts, thinks and feels. What is more, it helps to do away with the dichotomy between the "secular" and the "religious", between teaching secular subjects and being involved in catechetical and pastoral work. The aim of the Christian school is to educate the individual under all his aspects: to make him a good citizen and a good Christian (MF 160,3; MR 205,3). All the activities of the school pursue this aim.

In a school understood in these terms, the educator fulfils his "ministry" through the multiplicity of his activities. He helps the pupils to grow as individuals, to increase their knowledge and their skills and so open

up for themselves opportunities in society. At the same time, he helps them to develop their faith and grow in their relationship with God. In this way, the educator contributes to the fulfilment of the plan God has for his pupils. Fired with zeal such as this, he devotes himself generously to the "ministry" of education, not wishing to neglect anything that can further the education of his pupils.

MD 33 mentions some of the consequences of zeal understood in this way, and in particular, the personal knowledge of pupils which enables the teacher to adapt his approach to the individual: "Such conduct depends upon the knowledge and discernment of character. This is a grace you must beg of God most earnestly, as being one of the most essential for you in the direction of those over whom you have charge" (MD 33,1).

4.3. The catechist educates his pupils in the faith

The Christian educator shows his zeal — his concern, his commitment, his creativity — in a special way when he teaches catechism to the children entrusted to him and educates them in the faith. The very essence of his role as a teacher of religion is to introduce children to the faith, and to set them on the path of knowledge. This is one of the reasons why Christian schools exist, and are a valuable means of evangelising young people.

"The aim of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that it conducts schools. It entrusts the children to the care of the teachers from morning till night, so that, by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion and inspiring them with Christian maxims, they can teach the children to lead good lives, and in this way give them an education suited to their needs" (RC 1,3).

"Giving children a Christian education", making them "true Christians" (MF 160,3) and "providing children with a Christian mentality" (MR 197,2), these are the terms in which De La Salle defined the primary objective of Christian educators. This objective can be considered under three headings:

4.3.1. The catechist gives a **solid religious formation** which teaches young people the truths of the Christian religion, helps them to clarify their religious knowledge, and gives their faith a solid foundation which will serve as an inspiration for their lives as Christians (cf. MF 145,3; 116,2).

This can be achieved only by an excellent catechist, that is, by one who combines a solid faith with equally solid religious learning (cf. MF 153,1; 120,1; 170,1). In view of this, De La Salle invites the Brothers to deepen their knowledge of the faith by daily study.

A more radical suggestion made by the Founder is that the Brothers should live lives inspired by these truths, and frequently resort to prayer to implore God to give them the grace necessary in order to undertake such a task: "You are successors to the Apostles in their task of catechising and teaching the poor, If you want to make your ministry as useful to the Church as it can be, you must teach catechism every day, helping your pupils learn the basic truths of our religion [...]. Like them, also, you must afterwards turn your back on your work and spend time reading and making mental prayer, so that you can become thoroughly conversant with the truths and holy maxims you wish to teach them and, through prayer, draw down upon yourselves the grace of God you need to do this work" (MR 200,1).

4.3.2. The catechist **introduces children to the practice of their faith** and particularly to prayer and the sacraments. He teaches the pupils to pray by themselves and introduces them to the rewarding experience of meeting Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. He shows them how to take an intelligent and active part in liturgical celebrations, especially the Mass. He prays for his pupils and in their presence.

"We should induce them [the children] to pray often and with attention. We should also teach them the holy dispositions with which they should receive the sacraments, and at the same time encourage them to approach them frequently in order to keep their conscience free from sin. [...] You should pray fervently for those whom you find are least inclined to piety, so that God may make them feel the importance of salvation. You act as mediators in their regard, God making use of you to teach them the means of salvation" (MD 56,3 quoting 1 Co 3,5).

If you failed to train your pupils "in piety and to love prayer, you would be false prophets for them. If they are distracted in church, not saying their prayers, people will see from their misbehavior that you yourself are lacking in piety" (MD 60,3).

4.3.3. The catechist **forms their conscience** in order to help them base their ethical behavior on Gospel values. He tries, in particular, to inspire them with

an aversion for sin and occasions of sin, and to strengthen their attachment to Jesus Christ in the daily events of their lives : "Inspire them with a love of virtue and fill their hearts with sentiments of piety. Endeavour to ensure that God never ceases to reign in them" (MD 67,1). "Often encourage your pupils to avoid sin with as much speed as they would the presence of a snake. Make it your first care to inspire them with a horror for impurity, for misbehavior in church and during prayer, for stealing, lying, disobedience, lack of respect for their parents, and for other faults against their companions" (MR 200,1).

The catechist brings this about by prayer, word and example, by vigilance in school and in church (RC 2,10; MD 33,1; MR 194,2; MR 203).

The aim that De La Salle sets the educator in his work of teaching the Christian faith to his pupils shows the high level of spiritual life that could be attained by at least some of the poor pupils frequenting the Christian Schools: "Ensure that they often think of Jesus, their good and only Master, that they often speak of Jesus, that they aspire only after Jesus and that they breathe only for him" (MF 102,2).

4.4. A competent and effective educator

Zeal makes the Lasallian educator do his work competently, and respond effectively to the needs of the children and young people he teaches. Efficiency and professional competence are, among others, distinctive characteristics of Lasallian pedagogy.⁹ These are based on:

- Good professional training and ongoing formation to enable the teacher to fulfil his professional duties effectively (cf. MD 41,3; MF 120,1; 170,2).
- An efficient and realistic pedagogical approach, centred on the individual needs of children, taking into account their varying levels of knowledge, adapted to the speed at which individual children learn, and which tries to use methods tailored to the personal needs of the children (cf. CE 16,2). This approach aims to prepare pupils effectively for life and their place in society (CL 24,187 = CE 16,2,21).
- Constant revision of work by the teacher (CL 15,38 = R 8,2,21).

De La Salle invites his Brothers to adopt these professional practices in their work as educators. In his pedagogical writings, he provides them with a whole

series of guidelines, methods and techniques. He invites them to nourish themselves spiritually by adopting practices such as recalling the presence of God, and praying about the events of their life and work. He suggests also the practice of examining their conduct in the presence of God (MR 206,1; MF 91,3), and conversing with their Brothers (CL 15,62 = R 10,2,7).

4.5. Associated with other educators in the service of the poor

The Brother exercises his zeal and educates children as a member of a community of educators, and not as an individual. This is why, in association with his Brothers, he is a member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. De La Salle founded his Institute for the purpose of providing gratuitous human and Christian education to the children of the artisans and the poor. With this purpose in view, he recruited teachers, trained them, and established schools characterised by sound pedagogy and organisation.

"The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made of conducting schools gratuitously. [...] The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education. [...] There is a very great need for this Institute because the artisans and the poor, being normally little instructed and occupied all day long earning their living for themselves and for their children, cannot themselves give them the instruction they need, nor provide them with a decent and Christian education" (RC 1,1-4).

This text emphasises two very important characteristics of the context in which, ever since the beginning of the Institute, the Brothers have exercised their zeal:

1. The community aspect. Together and by association, the Brothers fulfil their mission as members of a community, working in close collaboration with one another. Together, they educate children, sharing a common approach and pursuing common objectives. In the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, De La Salle offers an excellent and impressive educational blueprint, intended to serve as a basis for the team-work of the Brothers. This blueprint guarantees also the continuity and the follow-through of teaching programmes despite changes of staff.
2. Accessibility for the working classes. This is one of

the reasons for having gratuity. The schools are open to all, but special concern is shown in them for the most needy.

The *Conduct of the Christian Schools* mentions ways of teaching the children of the artisans and the poor, which are better suited to their particular needs

(MF 150,1; 133,3; 113,1; 166,2; 137,2): "You are under the obligation to instruct the poor. You should, therefore, have a great tenderness towards them and supply their spiritual wants to the best of your ability, looking upon these children as members of Jesus Christ and as his much loved ones" (MF 80,3).

5. SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE ZEAL OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

For the Lasallian educator, therefore, zeal inspires a number of attitudes which together constitute a **particular way of being an educator**. Using some of the points mentioned previously in this article, we can summarise some of these Lasallian attitudes as follows:

5.1. Love for each of his pupils

A characteristic of the Lasallian educator is to relate to each pupil individually, to know him well, and to take his situation into account - his personal and family life, his talents - both while teaching him and when helping him to decide which courses to follow.¹⁰ Zeal leads the Lasallian educator to develop in himself an attitude of love for his pupils, of being close to them, and of being interested in all of them. This is the foundation of his work as an educator: "They will have a tender love for all their pupils. [...] They will show equal affection for all their pupils, more even for the poor than for the rich, because the Institute has entrusted the former to their care to a much greater extent than the latter" (RC 7,13-14).

5.2. Devotedness and dedication to his pupils

The zealous educator works for his pupils without asking for anything in return. He devotes himself to their Christian education without counting the cost either in time or effort (cf. MF 135,2; MD 58,1; MF 188,3; MR 198,2). He develops in himself an attitude of total availability, that of a teacher with a generous heart, who is disinterested, committed, accessible to everyone, full of concern, in particular, for those with the most problems. This dedication to the service of young people stimulates him to look diligently for the most appropriate and effective means to do his work (cf. MF 114,2; MR 200,1), means which are all the more effective for being shared by a group of educa-

tors inspired by the same values. Dedication to young people and diligence are not the result simply of a straightforward desire to be active and efficient: they are the consequence of love for children and young people; they are rooted in the faith which leads to zeal (cf. MF 166,2; 140,2; MD 70,2; MR 201,2).

5.3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The work of education and, in particular, of education in the faith, is full of difficulties which can lead to discouragement. The Christian educator needs the outpouring of the Spirit to give him the necessary strength to face difficulties, to give him patience, constancy, energy (cf. MD 49,1; MF 140,3; 166,3; 182,3). Seen with the eyes of faith, difficulties stimulate zeal (cf. MD 78,3; MF 168,3) and can provide a firmer foundation for the work of evangelisation (cf. MF 126,2).

5.4. Exemplary conduct

We teach more by what we are than by what we say or do. We can teach only when words are backed up by example. The Lasallian educator has to become an example and a model for his pupils (cf. MR 194,3; MF 128,1-3). His own experience as an educator led De La Salle to insist on the importance of example for the teacher: "Example makes a much greater impression on the mind and the heart than words. This is especially true in the case of children, since they do not yet have sufficient capacity for reflection, and ordinarily model themselves on the example of their teachers. They are led more readily to do what they see done for them than to carry out what they are told to do, especially when the words they hear do not correspond to the actions they see" (MR 202,3).

The awareness that example is a powerful educa-

tional means (cf. MF 158,3) encourages the zealous teacher to live better in order to teacher better. Zeal

influences not only his teaching but also the depths of his personality (cf. MD 69,1; MF 178,1).

*The history of the Institute since its foundation has always been the history of communities of teachers, of educational communities, formed of Brothers and other Lasallian educators, inspired by an evangelical zeal, putting their skills and their creativity at the service of the Christian school and its educational apostolate. Today this history has become that of a shared mission, characterised by the constant updating of the Lasallian educational approach to suit the specific circumstances of each school as it develops.*¹¹

¹ See CL 9,191-193

² Apart from the texts mentioned below, see MR 201 which is entitled: "The obligation of those who teach youth to have great zeal to fulfil well so holy a ministry", as well as the commentary by M. SAUVAGE and M. CAMPOS (AEP 282f; CL 46,220f).

³ See the article *Virtues of the Teacher* by S. SCAGLIONE and L. LAURAIRE in the present volume.

⁴ Cf. PUNGIER J., *Une spiritualité pour enseignants et éducateurs*, Paris, 1980.

⁵ GALLEGO S., *Vida y pensamiento de SJBS*, Madrid, 1986, vol. II, p. 33. Cf. PUNGIER, *op.cit.*, p. 10f.

⁶ Cf. GALLEGO, *op.cit.*, vol. II, p. 27f.

⁷ De La Salle borrows this expression from the Jesuit Julien Hayneufve, which does not make it any less true.

⁸ Cf. CANTALAPIEDRA C., *El educador de la fe segun SJBS*, San Pio X, Madrid, 1988; CHICO P., *Ideario pedagógico y catequístico de SJBS*, San Pio X, Madrid, 1988; PUNGIER J., *JBS, Le message de son catéchisme*, Rome, 1984.

⁹ The *Conduct of Schools* is the basic reference book of Lasallian pedagogy. See the article on this topic by L. Lauraire in the present volume, and the bibliography he provides.

¹⁰ The finest example of this pedagogy tailored to individual needs is found in the meditation on the Good Shepherd (MD 33). The *Conduct* describes specific methods based on personal attention to individual pupils.

¹¹ This concern to adapt to different times and places is shown by the numerous editions of the *Conduct* published between 1720 and the beginning of the 20th century. See the article on the *Conduct* in the present volume.

Complementary themes

Catechism	Example- Edification	Ministry
Child, Pupil, Disciple	Faith (spirit of)	Mission
Christian Teacher	Formation	Poor
Conduct of Schools	God's work	Prayer
Duties of a Christian	Gratuity	Pupil-teacher
Education	Hearts (to touch)	School
		Virtues of a teacher

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